

Demography and Lethal Violence¹

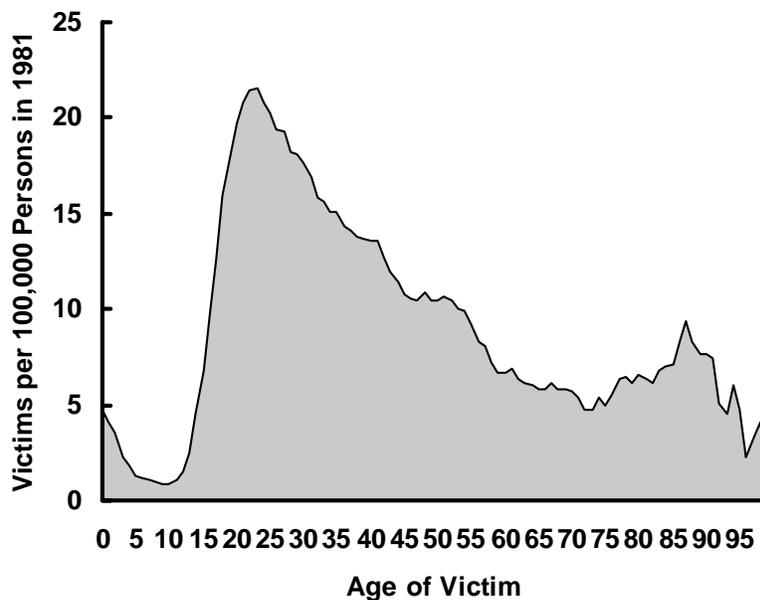
Allan F. Abrahamse, RAND

Summary

Because different demographic groups experience violence at different rates, changes in the homicide rate depend in part on changes in the demographic composition of the population at risk. Data describing the population and homicide experience for California from 1981 through 1995 suggests that demographic changes does not explain the *large* year-to-year changes we see in homicide rates.

The Age Distribution

Figure 1. Homicide Victims per 100,000 At Risk, by Age



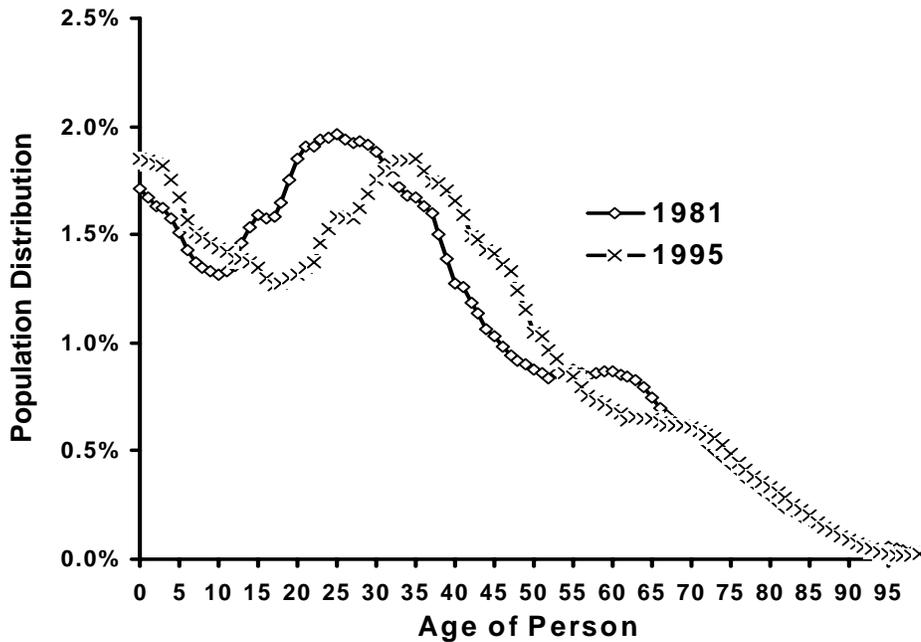
It is well-known that the homicide rate depends strongly on age. Figure 1 shows the age-specific homicide rate for the State of California in 1981. As can be seen, in the first year of life, about 5 out of every 100,000 children is murdered. This risk falls rapidly until about age 10, which was statistically the safest year of life as far as homicide is concerned. During the teen-age years, the risk rose rapidly to a peak at about age 21, and then fell slowly for the next fifty years or so. Late in life, the rate rises, perhaps because

¹ This paper was prepared with support from the James Irvine Foundation.

older folks are more likely to be killed by events that would only have been an injury for a younger person. For the oldest of the old, the rate falls again.

Over the last 15 years, the age composition of California's population has changed. Figure 2 shows the age-specific distribution of the population in 1981 ("diamonds"), and in 1995 ("X's"). Basically, the population got older. Since generally older persons face lower risks of homicide, an aging population could lead to one that appears less violent.

Figure 2. Age Distribution in 1981 and 1995



Race and Ethnicity

Different racial and ethnic groups face sharply different risks of homicide, and the homicide rate for males is always much higher than for females. This chart shows the homicide rate in California in 1981 for four race/ethnic groups, by sex. African-American males faced highest risk, followed by Hispanic males, and then by African-American females.

California has experienced a pronounced change in the ethnic make-up of its population. Figure 3 shows the fraction of its population that is either Hispanic (lower bar) or African-American (upper bar), between 1981 and 1995.

As Figure 4 shows, the relative share of the population that is African-American has remained roughly constant at about 7%. The relative share that is Hispanic has grown. Since Hispanic face higher homicide risks, this rise in the fraction of the population that is Hispanic could lead to an apparent rise in violence.

Figure 3. Race and Ethnic Composition

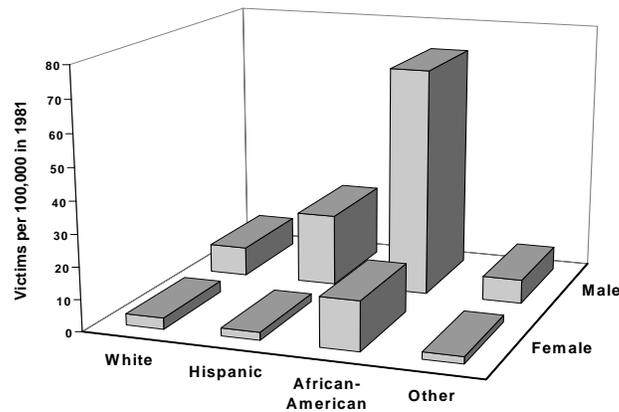
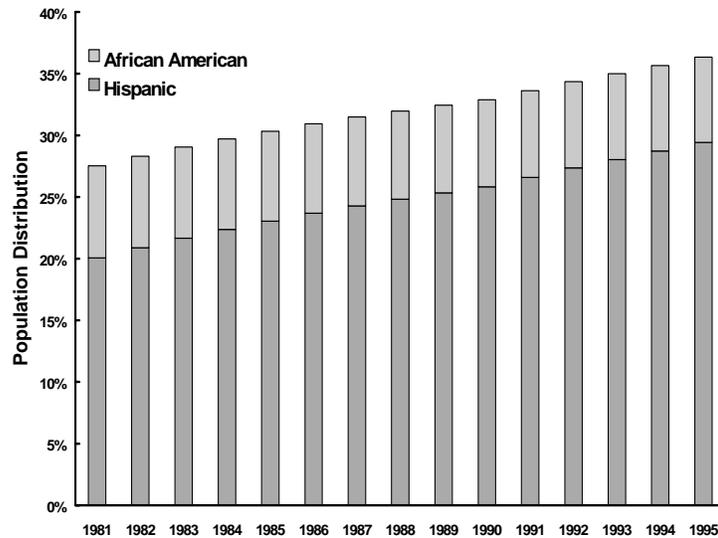


Figure 4. Race and Ethnic Change, 1981-1995



How Much Does Demography Matter?

How much of the variation in the observed homicide rate can be accounted for by these changes in the composition of California's population?

One way to answer this question is to ask: *what would the homicide rate have been if the only thing that changed was the population composition?*

To answer this question, I calculate the homicide rate by age, race/ethnicity and sex specific rates as observed in 1981, and apply this historical rates to the actual population counts in each subsequent year. The formula for the estimated rate in 1995 is just

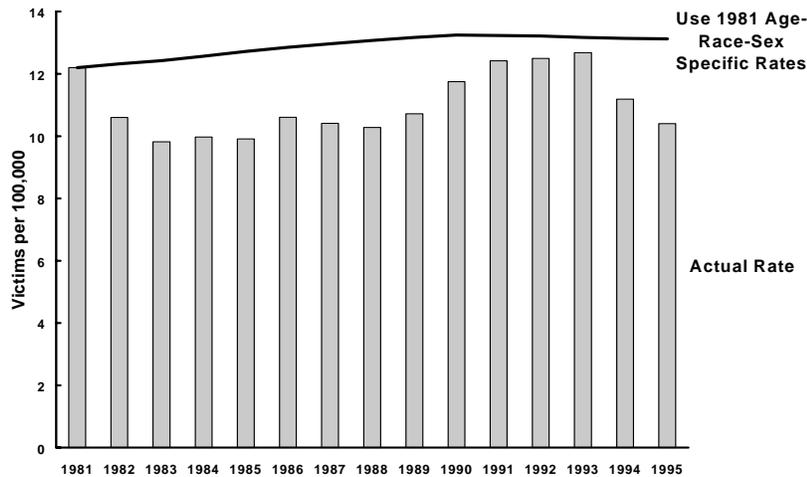
$$\text{Rate}_{1995} = \sum \text{Pop}_{1995,x} \text{Rate}_{1981,x} / \text{Pop}_{1995}$$

where x varies over all age, sex and race/ethnicity classes.

This estimated rate is plotted (line graph) in Figure 5. The homicide rate would have grown slightly over the rate seen in 1981, and then leveled off slightly around 1990. What actually happened (bar graph) was far different. After 1981, the rate dropped sharply in 1982 and 1983, grew rather slowly for the next five years, rose sharply between 1989 and 1993, reached a peak in 1993, and then fell dramatically in 1994 and 1995. Data recently released by the FBI indicate that rates fell again in 1996.

The important point here, however, is that *changes from year to year in the homicide rate are much greater than can be accounted for by mere changes in the composition of the population.*

Figure 5. Actual Homicide Rate and its Demographic Component



The demographic composition of California has changed a lot in the last 15 years, but the changes have been relatively small from one year to the next. Homicide rates depend in part on demographic composition, but these calculations suggest that demographic change plays only a small part in the changes we see from one year to the next.

WHAT WORKS? Using Firearm Tracing Information in Violence Reduction Intervention Projects

June 11, 1997, 8:30-9:45 Session
Session Recorder: Steven Roth

Speakers:

John Firman
Director of Research
International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)

Paul Blackman
National Rifle Association
Institute for Legislative Action

Joseph Vince
Chief, Firearms Division
Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms

Anthony Braga and David Kennedy
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

John Firman: A Work in Progress: The IACP Gun Trafficking Interdiction Project

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has been conducting a firearm trafficking interdiction project. In essence, it is a technical assistance project in which IACP personnel are sent to police departments throughout the United States to help law enforcement agencies track the source of guns recovered as part of criminal investigations within their respective jurisdictions. In order to get at the root of firearm homicide, information besides forensic evidence concerning the gun and the body can be used. Namely, by determining the trafficking routes and sources of firearms involved in homicides and other violent crimes, illegal gun trafficking can be interdicted. If the sources of illegal guns can be reduced, a decrease in homicides involving firearms will result.

Paul Blackman: The Limitations on BATF Firearm Tracing Data for Policymaking and Homicide Research

Criminological research based on firearm tracing data conducted by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) is suspect because ATF is asked to conduct traces on a

small minority of firearms used in crimes, including homicide. Also, the process by which law enforcement requests ATF to perform traces is selective—focusing on guns manufactured since 1990. It is not representative of all firearms recovered by police.

Of the guns recovered by Project Lead (the ATF/NYPD task force that seeks to determine the origin of firearms recovered by the NYPD), only six percent of the recovered guns are traced to point of original sale. Research by Glenn Pierce et al. has suggested that only two percent of firearms dealers are accountable for 75 percent of all gun sales, as revealed by ATF traces. In addition, ATF does not reported multiple sales. Because of these data deficiencies, while ATF trace data may be useful for law enforcement purposes, it is not useful for research purposes. While Project Lead has indicated that Virginia is the major state of original purchase for firearms recovered in New York City, only two percent of guns associated with homicide in NYC were originally purchased in Virginia, though ATF says this picture is changing . Lois Mock (NIJ) mentioned the NIJ study on gun trafficking in 17 U.S. cities that is based on *100 percent* of the firearms recovered in these cities.

Joseph Vince

Mr. Vince responded to Paul Blackman’s commentary on the research utility of using ATF trace data by saying “The proof is in the pudding.” In other words, firearms trace data has been used effectively to determine sources of guns ultimately used in criminal acts. Since Project Lead started in 1992, as a result law enforcement has interdicted thousands of illegal firearms. There have been 78 prosecutions resulting from evidence acquired through firearm traces. An enormous amount of data is being collected on suspect gun dealers, purchasers and illegal trafficking systems. However, there is a “learning curve” for efficient use of this information. In order for the trace program to be optimally effective, state and local law enforcement must utilize the system. ATF’s reports will be available through its webpage, thereby making the information more accessible, and the program more well-known.

Anthony Braga and David Kennedy

Since January 1991, every gun recovered by the Boston Police Department has been traced by ATF, resulting in 60 percent being successfully traced, 20 percent with obliterated serial numbers, and the remaining guns fitting a “new” profile. Of those who carry illegal firearms, youth (21 and under) are more likely to have semiautomatics, and to have guns with obliterated serial numbers. For non-gang youth from whom firearms were recovered, location of original purchase was as follows—Massachusetts: 35.5 percent; southern states: 29.2 percent; and 15.1 percent New England plus New York. This compares to location of original purchase for guns recovered from youth gang members—Massachusetts: 28.3 percent; southern states: 40.9 percent; and New England plus New York: 15.1 percent.

Concerning newly manufactured (less than two years old, “fast”) guns that are easier to trace, of 426 firearms, the types of guns recovered and traced were as follows—semiautomatics: 80.8 percent; shotguns: 7.7 percent; revolvers: 7.0 percent; and rifles: 4.5 percent. One-quarter of both

traceable and semiautomatic firearms are “fast.” Gang members particularly like to possess semiautomatic weapons—with semiautomatics comprising 87 percent of the firearms recovered from the people in the gang pool, and 75 percent of all guns recovered from youth. Three quarters of these were .380 caliber or 9 millimeter. Adults are more likely to possess .22 caliber firearms and shotguns. Types of guns more likely to have obliterated serial numbers are semiautos, and so-called “Ring of Fire” guns including Loricin.

ATF is conducting a study of guns with obliterated serial numbers, and new forensic techniques are being developed to raise defaced serial numbers to legibility—effective about 50 percent of the time.

Gun trafficking organizations became apparent through tracing of guns recovered from gang members. Most suppliers of gang guns went to Georgia to purchase, brought them to Boston, and sold them on the streets, the guns ending up in the hands of gang members. By examining the gun tracing data, multiple purchasers of guns were identified, which confirmed suspicions of problem gun dealers and purchasers.

As a result of the Boston gun tracing project, certain myths concerning firearm trafficking were debunked. One prior perception shown to be inaccurate is that the overwhelming percentage of guns recovered in Boston were originally purchased from southern states. The study also revealed that most guns involved in criminal investigations were purchased, rather than being stolen as previously believed. A great deal of transfers of firearms between gangs was evident.

One law enforcement strategy developed in response to the study’s identification of criminal gun purchasers was for the police to interview firearm dealers, especially dealers who sold a disproportionately high number of guns that ended up in criminal investigations). The police met with dealers, and made it clear to the dealers that if they sold a firearm to a particular (problem) person, law enforcement would make a thorough examination of the dealer’s business with an eye toward vigorous prosecution. In this and other ways, the study’s data is already being used to target law enforcement efforts.

Joseph Vince concluded that the study’s results shows the value of Project Lead, and extended an offer of assistance (as did John Firman of IACP) to anyone who might benefit from their assistance.

The Limitations on BATF Firearms Tracing Data for Policymaking and Homicide Research

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Abstract

BATF firearms traces are a tool for prosecution of individual crimes, with potential benefits in using the tracing data for law enforcement. There are, however, severe limitations on the utility of those data for criminological analysis and public policymaking aimed at reducing homicides, including the minimal number of trace attempts and successes, the rules for excluding guns and efforts to trace them, the limited information on the basis for gun traces. While gun policies have been influenced by tracing information, scientists should recognize the limitations of BATF tracing data for policymaking, even if encouraging improvements in collection and reasonable uses for law enforcement, policy evaluation, and homicide research.

Introduction

Soon after the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA '68) improved the paperwork trail for so that possible crime guns could be traced, without too much trouble, to their first retail sale, criminologists attempted to study statistical summaries of those traces with a view toward policy recommendations, even though such tracing "was not designed to collect statistics." (Bea, 1992, p. 65) To some extent, the trail had existed since 1938, when the Federal Firearms Act required inexpensive federal licenses for persons selling guns interstate, but it was not used. When Massachusetts' Commissioner of Public Safety, for example, testified on the need for additional federal legislation, his assertion that 87% of the state's crime guns came from elsewhere was based not on tracing them to other states but on failing to find them in Massachusetts' records. (U.S. Senate, 1965, pp. 345-46) Similarly, the staff report of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence relied on permit applications, rather than tracing data, to determine if a gun originated where it was misused. (Newton and Zimring, 1969, ch. 8)

Some of those early efforts, particularly by Frank Zimring, simultaneously attempted analyses while recognizing the limitations of the criminological use of BATF (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms¹) tracing data, limitations also emphasized by the Police Foundation in its study, *Firearm Abuse*. (Zimring, 1975, p. 183; Brill, 1977) For example, while using BATF tracing data to support the theory that relatively new guns are disproportionately used in crime, Zimring noted "the possibility that police and federal agency sampling procedures had produced

¹ Before becoming a bureau in 1972, it was the Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms Division of the Internal Revenue Service; for the past quarter century, its name has been shortened to the letters BATF or ATF, the former being more thoroughly descriptive, but both have been used extensively both outside and inside government, including the Treasury Department itself.

a nonrepresentative sample of guns from New York...the bedeviling problem of sample selection....” (Zimring, 1976, p. 96) He noted that older guns were more difficult to trace; some data were not crime-specific with possessory offenses predominating, something Zimring was reluctant to find a sufficient reason for labeling something a “crime gun”; prescreening prevented even tracing attempts for some firearms, and various other limitations on basing analyses on tracing data. (Zimring, 1976, pp. 97-98, 101, 104-106)

For its part, for the first two decades of GCA’68, as BATF sought to assist law enforcement, it produced annual summaries of tracing efforts, including the number of traces officially attempted and successfully completed, with anecdotal references to a major crimes solved with tracing and/or the speed of tracing guns involved in prominent shootings. For example, BATF proudly noted that tracing a gun from an armored-car robbery “led to the arrest and prosecution of the neo-Nazi cult known as The Order” and that the gun used in the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan was traced to John Hinckley in 16 minutes.² (King, 1988) Nonetheless, as BATF would acknowledge, its tracing is primarily for the purpose of aiding law enforcement in identifying suspects, establishing whether guns were stolen, and proving ownership (Pierce, Briggs and Carlson, 1996, p.5), rather than for the systematic analysis of crime guns or other policy- or research-related purposes.³

Limitations Related to State and Local Law Enforcement

Most guns involved in violent crimes are not traced, and those which are represent not merely a small but an unrepresentative sample. (Bea, 1992, p. 65) Some of this is unavoidable in a country with a relatively low clearance rate for violent crimes. Nonetheless, even most guns seized as a result of violent-crime investigations are not traced, and those traced are unrepresentative of firearms used, leading some scholars to suggest that confiscated firearms, while still flawed as a sample, provide a better sample of “crime guns” than traced guns. (Brill, 1977, pp. 26, 42)

As Gregore J. Sambor, then Philadelphia Police Commissioner, noted, “tracing a gun by use of serial number and proofmarks from a manufacturer, through the wholesaler, to the retailer and then the purchaser, and eventually the user, is not always necessary to prove the facts of the case or the elements of the crime....[And] when a local agency has adequate information and their own means available, they can sometimes produce their own results quicker and with less chance of error.” He went on to cite a police killing where the Philadelphia police found it more expeditious to telephone the German manufacturer, and thence the Virginia dealer, leading them to the brother of the person convicted. (Sambor, 1985)

² BATF offered its tracing capability to the U.S. Secret Service at 2:40 p.m. on March 30, 1981, and the Secret Service had BATF begin the tracing process at 3:20 p.m.; following some confusion on the Secret Service’s part regarding the serial number, the trace was completed by 4:30 p.m. (Office of the General Counsel, 1981, pp. 78-79.) The General Counsel found it noteworthy that the investigative activities were initiated during normal working hours, and that the tracing capability “would assume even more importance if a suspect had not been immediately apprehended at the scene.” (Office of the General Counsel, 1981, pp. III and 81)

³ Many of the limitations noted in this paper replicate the introduction to BATF’s National Tracing Center (NTC) by its director, Gerald A. Nunziato.

Tracing data may be unrepresentative because of the nature of criminal investigations. If state or local requirements provide more thorough recordkeeping than provided by federal law, there is no incentive to have BATF trace guns; tracing through BATF could be considered both superfluous and less efficient. For example, a Justice Department study based on surveys of police departments, reported that some jurisdictions, such as California, began with their own files on guns, and went on to note that such files existed, too, for New York, New Jersey, Iowa, Maryland, in addition to several cities, including Philadelphia and Miami. (Weber-Burdin *et al.*, 1981, ch. 4, p. 9) If jurisdictions with more records first use them (Roth and Koper, 1997, p. 83) and only then turn to BATF for firearms not found, while less restrictive jurisdictions start with BATF, one result of BATF tracing would be to exaggerate the out-of-state sources of “crime guns” in restrictive jurisdictions vis-à-vis less restrictive jurisdictions.

Even without such records, tracing might provide no particular benefit—aside from the sometimes useful one of excluding other suspects or other charges. Tracing is least needed where local resources are sufficient, or the basis for access to the gun irrelevant, as with violent gun-related crimes. Tracing should prove most useful where local resources are insufficient and tracing information is likely to be available and useful, as with out-of-jurisdiction guns not used in serious felonies—particularly if the trace might suggest the possibility of a less obvious serious crime, federal or state, such as gun and narcotics offenses. (For example, had tracing provided evidence that John Hinckley had broken the law in his acquisition of handguns, such tracing might have allowed prosecution for a GCA’68 violation, but tracing provided no information necessary for his prosecution for the violent crime of attempted presidential assassination.)

In the 1970s, most law enforcement agencies, according to an NIJ-funded study led by James Wright and Peter Rossi, made little use of BATF and were dissatisfied with the results. (Wright and Rossi, 1981, p. 23) Surveyed departments which used the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) almost all used it for almost all firearms, but little more than a quarter (with fewer agencies responding) of departments used BATF for most or every firearm implicated in a crime or found, confiscated, or recovered. (Weber-Burdin *et al.*, 1981, ch. 4, p. 13) The departments reporting some use (only about three-fourths as many as reported use of NCIC) found the experience much less useful than the NCIC, with over 30% reporting the experience was seldom useful or was useless. Thus, almost twice as many departments reported generally finding NCIC useful as similarly found BATF generally useful. (Weber-Burdin *et al.*, 1981, ch. 4, p. 16)

Although soon after that BATF began making serious efforts to improve cooperation with local police (Vizzard, 1997, pp. 88-89), and there has clearly been a great change in the willingness of local law enforcement to use BATF’s tracing services, some facts have remained constant over the decades. There is no standardized procedure for ensuring consistent definitions or terms for identifying the circumstances leading to a trace, if identified at all. In addition, categorization may be done hastily, because the investigation which would explain in full the reason a firearm

was obtained by police had not yet been completed, allowing such a determination to be made. (Bea, 1992, pp. 65, 70-71) And some dramatic changes in classification figures would suggest a classification change. For example, traced military-style semi-automatics went from being traced generally for “miscellaneous” reasons (39%) in 1986 to just 1% for that reason in 1990, with disproportionate increases both in violent crimes and gun-law violations. (Bea, 1992, p. 72)

And most guns seized by police and/or traced by BATF are not involved in violent crimes. Possessory offenses constitute the most common basis for a trace, with violent crimes only a minority of the reasons. Violent crimes explained 15% of traces in 1977, and gun-law violations (federal or state) about 45%, along with 20% unspecified “other” reasons than specific sorts of crimes. (Letter and documents from Paul Mosny, BATF Disclosure Branch, to Bob Dowlut, NRA, July 21, 1980) This despite the fact that, during the 1980s, the crime codes were listed in order of BATF-perceived severity, with only one crime code to be chosen. Nonetheless, property crimes, drug investigations, and gun-law violations predominated, with homicide investigations the most common violent crime investigation associated with a trace, and “miscellaneous” and “other” explaining almost as many traces as other violent crimes. (BATF tape analysis for 1989 supplied to the NRA, Feb. 9, 1990, based on coding tables, effective Oct. 1, 1986) There was not even a specific category for burglary. (Bea, 1992, pp. 70-71)

The 1990s’ coding of the types of crimes associated with traces is much more extensive, at nearly three dozen compared to ten or twelve in the 1980s (including transportation/possession of untaxpaid cigarettes), but with property crimes, gun-law violations, drug offenses, and other unspecified criminal investigations still predominating. (Letter from BATF Director John W. Magaw, to Sen. Larry E. Craig, April 1, 1994) In the largest recent study of BATF traces, roughly five-eighths were for weapons offenses, and just over one-seventh for violent crimes. (Pierce, Briggs and Carlson, 1996, Table 3) A study in Boston, where traces were to be conducted wherever possible on all seized guns, showed only 18% were connected to a substantive crimes rather than possessory offenses or in police custody for some other reason (Kennedy, Piehl and Braga, 1996a, Table 10) A Los Angeles area study of traced guns showed two-thirds for possessory offenses and one-sixth for violent crimes. (Wachtel, 1996, p. 12)

And even traces of guns as a result of a violent-crime investigation do not indicate the role of the firearm in the crime or the investigation. A firearm from a homicide investigation may have been used in the homicide, found at the scene, recovered from the body of the deceased—not likely to be uncommon where many homicides involve disputes between persons with criminal records (Kates, Schaffer, Lattimer, Murray and Cassem, 1995, pp. 579-84) where the loser is less likely than the winner to remove any of his weapons from the scene of the crime—or recovered at the time of the arrest. The most detailed statistical information from BATF simply indicates the sort of investigation associated with the trace request.⁴ A firearm simply found, turned in, or

⁴ Categories may not be very revealing: “other”; “miscellaneous.” “Weapons” or “GCA” or “Title 1” include offenses ranging from typographical errors to gun-trafficking and violent offenses. (Bea, 1992, p. 71) A stolen weapon trace could involve the thief or a found gun turned in to authorities. Some police-owned firearms are traced. (Brill, 1977, pp. 23-25) BATF’s Project Lead traces in New York City included the crimes of suicide and loitering. (Memorandum from Project Lead to Special Agent in Charge, New York Field Division, BATF, October 22, 1992)

otherwise recovered, might be traced to indicate whether it might have been stolen, potentially making it a property crime investigation, or the official reason given BATF for the trace might be miscellaneous or other. Nothing in the coding, or in any information collected by BATF and thus available to researchers or to others, indicates which of the guns traced were used to commit which crimes. As BATF has made clear with regard to the guns it traces, “ATF does not track the incidence of specific use of each one of these firearms in crimes....[T]races requested by police are not always for guns that are used in crimes. Traces are sometimes submitted for firearms recovered by police investigating crimes where the guns were found but were not necessarily used to commit a crime....We do not establish the criteria as to when State or local law enforcement agencies initiate a trace of a firearm.” (Letter from Daniel M. Hartnett [Deputy Director for Enforcement], for the BATF Director, to Rep. Richard T. Schulze, March 31, 1992)

Traces of guns to other states would not necessarily represent gun trafficking to avoid restrictive gun laws, especially with the average traced gun about five years old (Pierce, Briggs and Carlson, 1996), and untraced guns presumably still older, since age is a key reason for BATF not to attempt a trace. As a mobile nation, where roughly one-fifth of the populace moves each year, guns may be brought from another state simply because persons previously lived in another state. Unsurprisingly, more guns are apt to be bought where paperwork for firearms purchases make the process not only less cumbersome but, in general, less expensive. The large proportion of traces for possessory offenses would support skepticism regarding the amount of trafficking suggested by traces, but, of course, there is insufficient information on the reason for the trace for any such inference to be well founded. And the willingness of youthful offenders to discuss gun dealers but not drug dealers with police (Kennedy, Piehl and Braga, 1996a, p. 80) suggests gun traffickers are perceived by their customers to be less dangerous offenders.

Even when BATF is encouraging tracing, as with Project Lead in New York City, relatively few firearms are traced. During the first nine months of 1992, for example, of 13,382 firearms recovered by the New York Police Department, only 1,231 (9%) were submitted for tracing, and 824 traced (6%). And there is no basis for believing that even that small percentage is representative. At a time period when there were over one thousand gun-related homicides in the city, three firearms were traced to the alleged major crime-gun source, Virginia, as a result of homicide investigations. (Memorandum from Project Lead to Special Agent in Charge, New York Field Division, BATF, October 22, 1992) Regarding 1990, when a similar portion of New York City guns were selected for tracing, BATF indicated that “[n]o information is available on why those 1,000 guns were selected out of the 17,000 for tracing.” (Bea, 1992, p. 67) During the first nine months of 1992, there were about 35,000 gun-related violent crimes reported to the New York City police (Letter from Michael A. Markman, NYPD Office of Management Analysis and Planning, to Mark Overstreet, NRA, January 21, 1993); if violent crime involvement in all the traces were similar to the portion traced to Virginia, and from national BATF tracing data over the years, traces would have been completed for approximately 0.4% of New York City’s gun-related violent crimes.

Nonetheless, although traces are much more apt to involve weapons violations rather than violent crimes—roughly five-eighths of the traces analyzed by Pierce, Briggs and Carlson (1996, Table 3)—among violent crimes, homicide traces predominate, and they always have. A study based on traces from the mid-1970s found that, among violent crime-related traces, homicide investigations accounted for 45% of the traces. Unfortunately, that study also found a greater disparity between what confiscation and tracing data suggested about the types of guns used in homicides than for other violent crimes. (Brill, 1977, pp. 61-62) A computer analysis provided to the NRA by BATF for 1989 traces suggested about one gun trace for every four gun-related homicides reported to police, compared to one for every 125 gun-related assaults and one for every 250 such robberies. (FBI, 1990) More recently, with more extensive BATF efforts to persuade local authorities to use their NTC, the figure has risen to one trace for every: two gun-related homicides, 50 gun-related assaults, and 100 gun-related robberies. (Pierce, Briggs and Carlson, 1996, Table 3; FBI, 1996) The numbers for homicides, at any rate, are clearly reaching impressive size, even though the guns are not necessarily murder weapons. The expanded tracing efforts, however, because of BATF tracing practices, mean that for homicide there is now a large and unrepresentative sample rather than a small unrepresentative sample—with murder weapons differing from guns involved in non-lethal assaults. (Brill, 1977, p. 71)

Limitations Due to BATF Tracing Practices

BATF recognizes the limitations local law enforcement practices place on statistical analyses based on tracing data. The standard “data advisory” BATF’s NTC sends out with data requests notes that their data only reflect trends relating to trace-requested guns, not to crime guns overall; that trace requests involve “trace requests submitted on firearms used in crimes, recovered from crime scenes, or suspected of being involved in crimes”; but BATF relies upon those federal, state, or local authorities submitting a request to ensure that guns are related to crime investigations; not every gun recovered is traced, and BATF does not know the extent to which recovered guns are voluntarily submitted for traces. BATF’s NTC notes that the accuracy of their reports are dependent upon the accuracy of data submitted. That advisory is well worth respecting, but it minimizes the limitations of tracing data.

In addition to local law enforcement limitations on the representativeness of traced guns, BATF imposes restrictions on tracing all but guaranteed to make traced guns unrepresentative of crime guns—with changes in those restrictions making temporal comparisons of tracing data problematic even as they improve the efficiency and usefulness of tracing as a law-enforcement tool—even when those restrictions are used without an eye for policymaking or policy support. This is somewhat contrary to the BATF’s NTC’s more limited advisory that the data “ONLY reflects trends relating to those firearms for which a trace request is submitted and is only as accurate as the information provided by trace requestors.”

At least some of BATF’s restrictions on tracing, however, unlike the unknown mechanisms by which local jurisdictions decide which guns to trace, is systematic, even if changing. BATF does

not like to attempt traces where success is unlikely, either to enhance its abilities to report a higher success rate—in the same way prosecutors pride themselves on conviction percentages—or simply because the agency wishes the most cost-effective use of its resources. It has thus long excluded older firearms (Brill, 1977, pp. 94-95), as well as those whose serial numbers have apparently been removed (Kennedy, Piehl and Braga, 1996a, p. 63), the technical efforts needed to restore the number being deemed excessively costly. In order to enhance the apparent success rate, local law enforcement is asked to prescreen guns, and not ask for traces on those likely to be too old to be traced. (Brill, 1977, pp. 57-58) The same cost-effective motivation means rarely seeking to trace a firearm beyond its initial retail transfer.⁵

BATF's desire to make its tracing cost-effective severely limits its ability to provide useful data for analysis. In the past, the records of out-of-business dealers were less accessible than those of active federally-licensed dealers, so such traces would be scotched as not worth the effort (Brill, 1977, p. 125), with such handguns underrepresented in trace samples. (Zimring, 1976, p. 105) With computerization of those records, now over half of traces use information from federal licensees who have gone out of business (Pierce, Briggs and Carlson, 1996, p. 8), a figure likely to rise at least some more as the number of dealers has dropped over 60% during the Clinton administration. And tracing data rarely give much in the way of sufficient detail for some analysis. For example, the make, model, and serial number of a gun may allow a quick trace, but specific information about the cosmetics of the gun may not be on record (e.g., whether a particular semi-automatic rifle has a folding stock); other information not determined by the manufacturer will also be left out, such as the capacity of the magazine in the firearm as recovered; and information which should be readily available may be reported incorrectly or at least inconsistently. (Roth and Koper, 1997, p. 88) Tracing data for 1988 list Colt's semi-automatic versions of its M16 at least a dozen different ways—with variations on spacing, hyphenization, names, letters, abbreviations, and others where the designation is unclear, or the name or model are totally wrong—with even more for the Norinco semi-automatic imitation of the AK-47. In addition, traces rarely go beyond the simple information of who bought a gun where, to whether that same purchaser acquired other firearms within a relatively short period of time in the same or nearby stores. While some additional data could be elicited from traces, that would involve expenditures of manpower incompatible with BATF efforts to make tracing a more cost-effective law enforcement tool.

Improvements in BATF recordkeeping and computerization—some lawful and some apparently *ultra vires*—have enhanced its ability to conduct traces, particularly of recent sales and of out-of-business dealers. And BATF has made efforts to encourage more traces by law enforcement agencies, particularly urban agencies, increasing the number of traces from roughly 40,000

⁵ Such labor-intensive tracing may be attempted when essential to a case. The Beretta used in about half of the so-called Zebra slayings in San Francisco in the 1970s was painstakingly traced by BATF and the San Francisco police beyond the first retail sale through seven private transfers. (Adams, 1978) In the past, traces were counted as successful once traced to a dealer in the state of the requestor on the grounds it was then no longer a matter of interstate commerce and, thus, a federal responsibility. (BATF, 1978, p. 2; Brill, 1977, p. 83)

annually to closer to 100,000. That effort has been seen by a friendly critic with decades of experience at BATF as partially politically inspired and based on a misunderstanding of the firearms market and the purposes of tracing, incorrectly emphasizing trafficking while most crime guns move in individual transactions. (Vizzard, 1997, pp. 202, 210, 217-18) Nonetheless, the increased numbers, combined with limitations on the age of guns the Bureau is willing to attempt to trace, make earlier tracing data chronologically incomparable to more recent data. The improvements are geared toward enhancing the speed with which successful traces can be conducted, and minimizing the need for labor intensive further delving by BATF agents. Yet it is precisely the sorts of information which might be elicited from such further investigation from which criminologists might hope to learn more about criminals and their guns and gun sources.

More recently, recognizing that tracing older firearms to their first retail purchaser is not a cost-effective way to attempt to solve crimes, but that tracing more recent guns may not only help solve crimes but provide benefits in allocating law-enforcement resources toward particular dealers, dealer types, or areas, BATF has more sharply limited its willingness to attempt traces. It has gone this decade from rejecting most attempts at pre-1985 guns to rejecting most attempts at pre-1990 guns. (Kennedy, Piehl and Braga, 1996a, p. 58) With traced guns normally over five years old—and six years for homicide-related traces—such a limitation undermines any confidence that traced guns are representative of crime guns. (Pierce, Briggs and Carlson, 1996, pp. 8-9 and Table 3) The emphasis on newer guns automatically means an emphasis on semi-automatics compared to revolvers, since they have come to dominate the newly-manufactured handgun market, going from about one quarter to about four fifths of new handguns between 1978 and 1993. (Thurman, 1994, pp. 102-103) To some extent, such a new-gun emphasis would also emphasize the relatively newer military-style semi-automatics and relatively inexpensive semi-autos as well, roughly 0.33% of which are traced compared to 0.1% of guns from the more traditional northeastern manufacturers. (Wintemute, 1994, p. 63)

In addition, trace attempts are frequently unsuccessful, even after exclusions, with a figure fairly constant over time, but increasing as more gun traces are attempted. In the 1970s, the estimate was that up to about 40% of traces were unsuccessful (Brill, 1977, pp. 84, 117; Weber-Burdin *et al.*, 1981, ch. 4, pp. 6-7), with a 45% failure rate with the massive tracing the guns of “youth offenders” in Boston. (Kennedy, Piehl and Braga, 1996a, Table 5) And, while the data were not presented particularly clearly, it appears that a trace study by a BATF agent in the Los Angeles area achieved only about a 42% success rate, supplementing California state records checks with traditional BATF tracing procedures. (Wachtel, 1996, pp. 10-12) At the Homicide Research Working Group’s Summer 1997 Seminar, Nunziato reported a 60% failure rate.

Investigations can, whether deliberately with a view toward influencing policy, or by chance, affect what tracing may indicate. Pierce, Briggs and Carlson (1996, p. 9) noted that a “sting” operation made Vermont data stand out disproportionately but irrelevantly. Similarly, a serious investigation had the same effect in evaluating Virginia as a source of crime guns—and the end of the investigation could affect the evaluation of Virginia’s gun rationing law later. When it was reported that 41% of the crime guns came from Virginia, it was variously reported that 27% of the 41% (10% of the total) (Goode, 1992), or “the vast majority” of the 41% (Hynes, 1992) came

from a single gun store, which BATF was investigating in part with undercover purchases going to New York. Whether BATF warned an uncooperative store of the problem of multiple purchasers being gun traffickers, or the owners regularly telephoned BATF regarding suspicious multiple purchases which might be headed for New York, with BATF reassuring them that the guns should be sold, the problem involved some guns carefully followed by BATF to New York and then traced back, not guns which just by chance happened to be traced to Virginia. (Affidavit of BATF Agent Irvin W. Moran, before U.S. Magistrate Judge David G. Lowe, August 25, 1992; letter from BATF Director John W. Magaw to Senator Olympia J. Snowe, February 23, 1996) A speedier crackdown on the offending gunshop would have prevented the gun trafficking data from being so impressive, and Virginia becomes as representative because of an investigation or sting or entrapment—depending upon one’s view of the investigation—as the Vermont sting which Pierce, Briggs and Carlson note made Vermont data artificially high for their study.

Policy-influenced Limitations on Tracing Data

Policy may, intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to the unrepresentative nature of traces. With the rise of the military-style semi-auto issue, special studies influenced the sort of firearm being traced, such as one in Detroit, focusing specifically on “assault weapons,” and BATF made special efforts to check out purchasers of such arms, in projects known as “forward traces” from the dealer to the first retail purchaser, rather than the reverse direction. (Bea, 1992, pp. 67-68; personal communication from gun dealers) In addition, rhetorical statements by politicians and higher-ranking BATF employees that such guns were the preferred choice of drug traffickers, organized crime, etc., could spur at least some local authorities to make greater efforts to trace such guns on the presupposed and circular-reasoning that the traces were more apt to provide evidence of drug trafficking, organized crime, etc. Such an investigative reason could be the basis for the trace request, even if the ensuing investigation demonstrated that gun possession was the most serious offense involved particular cases. “If...law enforcement offices in certain regions have determined that certain types of firearms (such as military-style semiautomatics that accept large capacity magazines) should be traced because they are thought to be used by dangerous offenders, the data in the tracing system will reflect those specific concerns.” (Bea, 1992, p. 68)

Similarly, if certain persons are said to be more apt to be involved in certain types of offenses—say, young black males and gangs—then guns found with the arrest of those persons are more apt to be traced, with the suspected characteristic the basis for the trace request. It then becomes of self-fulfilling prophesy: If there is a greater tendency to trace certain types of guns, or guns found in the course of the arrest of certain types of persons, with narcotics, organized crime, or the like given as the type of criminal investigation, then those guns or persons will be found, using tracing data, to be disproportionately involved in the activity in question. The trace request cites the type of investigation; nothing in BATF tracing data indicates a negative investigative conclusion.

The unrepresentative effect of policy-related tracing was demonstrated perhaps most dramatically with the Cox Newspapers analysis of BATF traces. While BATF tracing data indicated that military-style semi-automatic firearms (“assault weapons”) constituted 19% of crime guns in Los Angeles, the highest of any of the cities studied, LAPD data indicated that such firearms constituted only 3% of crime guns seized in that city. (Cox Newspapers, 1989, p. 4; letter from Edward C. Ezell, Curator, National Firearms Collection, Smithsonian Institution, to Rep. John D. Dingell, March 27, 1989) And their actual use, two years later, in famed youthful drive-by shootings was all but non-existent, at one documented incident in 677 shootings (Hutson, Anglin and Pratts, 1994, p.326), and dismissed for their “minor role” in a study of the gang killings, for which they were supposedly a preferred weapon, during that period. (Hutson *et al.*, 1995)

More recent efforts involve the goal of nationalizing the policy of limiting handgun purchases to one per month, by showing that such legislation curtailed Virginia’s role as a gun-supplying state has been curtailed (Weil and Knox)⁶—a goal easily achieved by determining on which states’ dealers to focus limited BATF investigatory efforts. Working with the Atlanta office of BATF, New York City authorities arranged that an “undercover officer in New York City would place an order for handguns with the defendants, who would then travel to Georgia, use an accomplice to make a seemingly lawful purchase of firearms from a local dealer, and then immediately return to New York with the guns.” Forty-eight firearms were recovered in the course of the investigation and, presumably, dutifully traced by BATF back to the place where New York authorities had arranged for many of them to be purchased. (District Attorney, County of New York, 1997) The New York authorities involved in the investigation are also promoting gun rationing on a national level, which is also the policy of the Clinton administration under which BATF operated. Even if policy is not the only goal, the investigators themselves helped to determine where guns would be traced to, and, in all likelihood, at least some of the details (caliber, action type, and price, if not also makes and models) of the sorts of guns which would be purchased and thus traced.

BATF Tracing Data Used in Policymaking and Evaluation

With some encouragement from BATF, tracing data analyses and studies are being used to influence and evaluate policymaking. The federal ban on so-called “assault weapons” called for an evaluation on the effects of the legislation after three years. The FBI Uniform Crime

⁶ In addition to problems in using tracing data, explaining changes based on the gun rationing law would be undermined by two factors: First, the same legislative session required proof of residency for driver’s license applicants (Virginia Code §46.2-323). And the rationing, in fact, rarely applies; during the first three years, applications for multiple handgun purchase requests were denied to 3% of applicants, and another 2% withdrew their applications. (Personal communication from Captain R. Lewis Vass, Department of State Police, August 30, 1996) Captain Vass testified to a state crime commission that the law has “not significantly affected ... the number of multiple handgun purchases within the Commonwealth.” (August 29, 1995)

Reporting Section was asked in advance if it knew “of any data which exist which would provide a base for determining whether these firearms are used more, less, or the same during the next three or four years, or are more or less available to criminals?” The response was, “The UCR Section knows of no existing data to provide a basis to address the question.” (Letter from Paul H. Blackman, NRA, to J. Harper Wilson, July 20, 1990; letter from J. Harper Wilson, Chief, Uniform Crime Reporting Section, to Paul H. Blackman, September 5, 1990)

The evaluation was assigned to the Urban Institute, which, absent other sources of information, used BATF tracing data, recognizing some of its limitations, including the nonrepresentative sampling suggesting only about 10% of gun crimes and 2% of violent crimes result in BATF trace requests. They further noted the lack of a comparison between traces of “specific banned assault weapon models with trends for non-banned models that are close substitutes.” (Roth and Koper, 1997, pp. 8, 82) They nonetheless defended the use as “the only such national sample” although “BATF trace data should be interpreted cautiously.” (Roth and Koper, 1997, p. 83) With no reliable data on pre- or post-legislative criminal misuse of proscribed or similar guns, the caution is more advised than nevertheless proceeding with the uncertain interpretation.

BATF tracing data were used in popular literature designed to support gun rationing as a means to curb the politically-inspired attack gun trafficking—with “Batman” becoming perhaps the first comic character successfully to lobby for state legislation—and then in its evaluation. (Ostrander and Giarrano, 1993; Sugarmann and Rand, 1994, p. 11; Weil and Knox, 1996; Vizzard, 1997, pp. 217-18) No effort was made to determine whether any of the guns involved in violent crime investigations, before or after the law took effect, or involved multiple purchase, despite the fact that purchases of more than one handgun in a business week are reported to BATF by the dealer [18 U.S.C. §923(g)(3)], and investigations of dealers, such as that which led to the prosecution of the largest alleged Virginia source of New York crime guns, was spurred by such multiple purchase reports. (Hynes, 1992) Project CUE, at a time with similar out-of-state sources for New York’s traced guns, in its investigations, found “that the majority of the firearm movement from States is occurring on an individual basis. That is to say that an individual will acquire a firearm in another State through the actual purchase by relative or friends and then transport that firearm back” to his own metropolitan area, with self-protection the primary motive. (BATF, 1977, p. 61) That view remains the conclusion of the historian of BATF, who voices criticism of the new focus on trafficking. (Vizzard, 1997, p. 202) Project CUE went beyond simple tracing data, which provide no particular reason to suggest any particular explanation as to where New York City’s violent criminals get their guns or whether gun rationing at the state or federal level is a rational response.

Potential Policymaking and Evaluative Uses of BATF Tracing Data and Their Limitations

The improvements in tracing records, and, working with some criminologists, their analysis should enhance law enforcement efforts, particularly against illicit firearms traffickers, even if

their role is exaggerated partly for political reasons. (Vizzard, 1997, pp. 202, 218) There are, however, thus far only two apparent policymaking uses for those tracing data. An evaluation of which dealers are more apt to have firearms traced to them, in addition to suggesting which dealers may be breaking the law themselves, or insufficiently diligent, or simply in an area where criminal misuse by customers is more popular, might suggest the curtailment of which sorts of dealerships might disproportionately reduce illicit firearms trafficking.

Research by Pierce, Briggs and Carlson (1996, Table 5) for BATF suggest that a tiny fraction of dealers are vastly disproportionately involved in firearms traces. Ninety-two percent of dealers were involved with no traces, and less than 2% of dealers accounted for over three-fourths of traces. Those data could provide a basis for seeking more information about those dealers which could suggest for whom federal firearms licenses should be more difficult to obtain, or other regulations which might be appropriate. For example, the administration, eventually with the legislative approval of Congress, has drastically reduced the number of dealers during the past few years. Data on dealer tracing could suggest whether the sorts of dealers driven out of business constitute the sort of dealer most or least apt to sell guns eventually traced to them. Those data were not used to make the policy. And there has been no post facto suggestion that the policy was warranted by the data.

And another study used tracing data to show, among other things, how different guns turned in during amnesties were from guns used by criminals, particularly younger criminals. So different were the guns turned in that only about one-eighth could be traced, and an effort at evaluation found that three-fourths of the guns were manufactured before the enactment of GCA '68. (Kennedy, Piehl and Braga, 1996b, pp. 156-58) The authors went on to conclude that, while tracing data gave no reason to believe turn-in programs would have crime-control value, they might be beneficial for symbolic values. (1996b, p. 165)

There would appear to be no other obvious area where policymaking might benefit from an analysis of BATF firearms tracing data as currently collected. And even in those situations, the traces alone would be insufficient. For example, without additional information about the types of dealerships—their conformity to local zoning and other regulations, and the like—which would make traces more time-consuming and costly, it would not be clear that the dealers whose guns are traced merit loss of license. With more serious follow-up research, there would, however, be other areas where cautious use of tracing data might provide the base for more extensive research.

Similarly, if BATF traces were followed up by more extensive investigation than the simple trace, the data could prove useful in learning more about where criminals get their guns and what their preferences are. For example, if, in addition to encouraging more local law enforcement agencies to trace virtually all recovered firearms, data were collected on the relation of the traced firearm to the criminal investigation (used in the homicide, recovered at the scene, etc.) or follow-up information on the criminal investigation (was the criminal investigation founded?

was there drug trafficking involved, or had the gun in fact been taken in a burglary, etc.? how did the firearm come to be in the state where it was recovered? what was the path of ownership and the means of transfer?), then the potential would exist for learning more about the nature at least of relatively new crime guns or criminal preferences in guns.

Most efforts by BATF, however, have been to make tracing more cost-effective, not expanding the information gathered with labor-intensive follow-up inquiries. An inexpensive expansion involves collecting some information on all guns seized in certain cities, including guns for which no trace is attempted. (Personal communication from Gerald Nunziato, BATF NTC) Thus, while the Congressional Research Service noted the problems with the tracing system in terms of statistical analysis, it made it clear that the limitations on the system should not necessarily be rectified: "the system is designed to expedite requests from law enforcement agencies on the history of firearm ownership, there would likely be little benefit in placing additional restrictions or requirements on officers submitting the trace request. The more important accomplishment of the system design...is to minimize paperwork and administrative burdens on the requesting agency." (Bea, 1992, pp. 65-66) And efforts to encourage more detailed data collection by BATF and from local law enforcement is apt to be even less successful than the current efforts at more thorough data collection for the Uniform Crime Reporting Program.

Conclusion

Suggesting sharp limitations on the utility of BATF tracing for criminological research in no way undermines either the benefits of tracing as a law-enforcement tool in general, or the benefits of recent improvements in BATF's tracing abilities. The traces were envisioned as a law-enforcement tool, not a law-making tool, and retain utility for that envisioned purpose. To the extent it might be argued that, however weak, BATF tracing data are the only data available for certain criminological or policymaking goals, that discouraging fact would simply mean there are no data available; absence of other data does not make unrepresentative data representative.

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Gangs, Drugs and Youth Violence

Recorders Notes

Each presentation was followed by a brief question/answer discussion period. What follows is a summary of these questions and answers. Every attempt was made to extract the essence of the question and answer, however, it was not possible to capture verbatim the wording of all questions and answers.

Gangs Race/Ethnicity and Houston Homicide in the 1990's

- Q. What is the Asian and sub-ethnic mix of your data
- A. Vietnamese is the largest proportion of the Asian population in Houston.
- Q. Have look at the structure of police department? Have they added an Asian gang unit?
- A. The Houston police department has for some time had a Chicano squad and now they have an Asian squad. Chicano squad has been in existence since early 80s. The Chicano squad seems to be a political issue so it has stayed around.
- Q. If your are recording location of homicide have you looked the spatial relationship between victim address and offender address?
- A. Right now we have incident address. Adding the victim-offender addresses will be the next task. George Tita looked at the spatial typology of gang homicide and he will be discussing this shortly.
- Q. Does the nature of gang activity differ by ethnicity?
- A. Houston doesn't make a distinction by ethnic groups.

Today's Music and Youth Violence

- Q. What is the effect of Tu Pac and other gang-rappers on glorification?
- A. It brings attention to the issues. What gang rap does is glorify violence, puts the lifestyle out there as a viable lifestyle. Provides messages that glorify dying and the culture. Provides something to emulate.
- Q. Is there any chance that if rap music was different, less violent, that kids would be into in such a way that it would make them less violent?

- A. Gang rap is simplistic. The kids I see already start out with a destructive core. The only course open to them is acting out. Kids who have a challenge need to get out the violence. The literature is mixed. Kids who don't have a recourse repeated experiences. It can have a desensitizing result. For kids who are unhealthy this would.
- Q. What about the media response. The exposure of violence in the media increases the sense of fear and vulnerability.
- A. Yes.
- Q. What about the fantasy aspect—escapism of rap music.
- A. White kids are buying this music, a lot of the kids I see are predisposed to aggression and this music validates their aggression. The fantasy aspect comes from the need for a frame of origin and a need to make sense of the world. Kids who don't have a fantasy— these kids are in the market for a solution.

The Gang-Drug-Gun Nexus: Evidence from Pittsburgh

- Q. Your assumption is that gang motivated homicides are driving the increase in homicides, however, it appears that gang motivated homicides are a relatively small percent of all homicides?
- A. About 30% of all targeted homicides are gang motivated homicides.
- Q. What about the data—how did you make the coding decision to define gang motivated, and how has the quality of the data changed over time?
- A. We came in with no clear idea—read each file and based our coding decision on the eyewitness testimony in the homicide files. I guess the coding was done by the eyewitness or the statements in the files. If they indicated it was gang motivated we used that information.
- Q. Did you have a consistent set of criteria or was it based on each case?
- A. Each case. Also some validation by various police departments.
- Q. Define targeted. Who is included and not included in this group.
- A. As far as our use of the term “Targeted” homicides we use it to distinguish between type of homicides that we hypothesize that might be driving the increase (and subsequent

decrease) in the level of total homicides being committed versus other more stable homicides (felonious, arson, domestics, disputes.) We define a “Targeted” homicide as an event that was:

1. gang involved: either the offender or the victim was a gang member
2. Drug involved: that the precipitating factors that lead to the incident involved the use or marketing of narcotics including the robbery of drug dealers.
3. “youth” involved: either the offender or the victim was less than 25 years of age AND a gun was involved.

GANGS, RACE/ETHNICITY AND HOUSTON HOMICIDE IN THE 1990S

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Abstract

This paper uses police and newspaper data to examine the extent and character of gang-related homicide in the early 1990s in Houston. Gang-related homicides in Houston from 1990-1994 tended to much more involve Hispanics and Asian compared to non-gang homicides. Gang homicides were more likely to occur in the public domain while non-gang homicides were predominately residential in nature. Finally, gang homicides were more likely in school months and relatively rare during non-school months.

Literature

This paper addresses gang-related homicide in Houston, Texas in the 1990s. Although estimations of the exact number of gangs, gang members, and gang-related violent crimes vary widely (due to the lack of an acceptable definition of “gangs” and official reporting inconsistencies) it is generally accepted that gang activity has steadily increased in America since the mid-1980s (Curry, Ball, and Decker 1996; Klein 1995; Spergel 1989). Spergel (1995) found that all 50 states exhibited some form of youth gang activity and others have shown that gangs are present in nearly all large U.S. cities (Miller 1982; Needle and Stapleton 1983). Studies of large urban areas such as Los Angeles and Chicago suggest that gang-related homicides have reached unprecedented levels compared to the recent past. Klein (1995) estimated that by the middle of this decade, there would be over 800,000 gang members in more than 9,000 gangs in the country. Curry et al. (1996) suggest that there are already 16,000 gangs in the country committing over half a million crimes per year.

This apparent increase in gang activity and gang-related crime has led to public perceptions that gang-related violence constitutes a more serious threat to society than non-gang violence. As a result, previous research efforts have been based on the premise that distinct and substantial differences exist between gang and non-gang violence with respect to a variety of demographic and incident-based characteristics. Although a variety of gang-related violent crimes have been studied, particular emphasis has been placed on homicide. This is because it is arguably the more serious criminal offense and because of its reliability as a measure of the extent and seriousness of gang violence (Spergel 1995).

Previous studies suggest that there is some justification for public concerns regarding the threat of gang-related violence as compared to non-gang violence. Research has shown significant differences between gang and non-gang homicides with respect to participant characteristics such as ethnicity, age, number of participants, and relationship between participants (Spergel 1984; Maxson, Gordon, and Klein 1985; Rogers 1993). Gang members involved in homicide incidents were younger and more likely to be minority males than their non-gang counterparts. Gang homicides were also more likely to involve the use of automobiles and firearms and to be committed in public areas than non-gang homicides. Klein, Maxson, and Cunningham (1991) further validated these findings in a study concerning the involvement of Los Angeles gangs in the distribution of crack cocaine.

In a study of all police-reported homicide incidents for California in 1989, Bailey and Unnithan (1994) also found that suspect and victim age, the number of suspects, lack of prior suspect/victim contact, public location, and use of firearms were all significant in distinguishing between gang and non-gang homicides. Gang-related homicides were more likely to involve younger African-American and Hispanic suspects and victims, a greater number of suspects, and the use of a firearm than non-gang homicides. These incidents also typically occurred between individuals with little or no previous social contact and were usually committed in public places.

In general, the majority of gang-related homicides have traditionally been intra-racial. For example, 92 percent of gang-related homicides in L.A. were either black on black or Hispanic-on-Hispanic (Klein 1995). This trend, however, may be undergoing subtle, yet significant, changes. Increasing levels of gang activity and greater race/ethnic heterogeneity may be contributing to an increase in interracial gang-related violence related to territorial disputes (Dellios 1994). Spergel (1995) and Short (1990) contend that the territorial nature of street gangs is responsible for many of the gang-related homicides in urban areas. They argue that fluctuations in rates of gang-related homicide may be due to periodic acts of retaliation for one gang encroaching into another gang's territory. It has also been suggested that involvement in drug trafficking has resulted in increased levels of gang-related violence, particularly homicide, as gangs attempt to protect their economic interests by equipping themselves with firearms (Moore and Kleinman, 1989).

Data

To begin to assess the relationship between gangs and homicide in Houston in the 1990s, we use data collected in two separate enterprises. First, we rely on data by the Houston Police Department Homicide Division (HPD). The police department provided us with their murder log data from all the homicides that were investigated from 1984 (when the homicide records first began to be computerized) to 1994 (N = 5,435). These data include information on motive, relationship between victim and offender, specific (street address) and general (type of premise) location of offense, case status (e.g., cleared by arrest, open, etc.), date of offense, type of weapon used, and name, race, gender, and age of the victim and offender (when known). Beginning in 1989, the department began to code "gang-related" homicides in the "motive"

variable. Since most of the available data on gang and non-gang homicide comes from official police statistics, some concern has arisen as to the reliability and validity of police reporting practices with respect to the designation of homicide cases as being “gang-related” (Spergel, 1995). For example, as Block and Block contend:

Since 1965, the Chicago Police Department has designated incidents, including homicides, as street-gang related if investigation determines that a gang-related motive was the reason for the offense. In contrast, the definition of gang-related in Los Angeles depends on gang membership; gang-related homicide is measured by checking victims and offenders against a list of known street gang members (1991: 13).

To check validity issues, we collected over 7,000 stories printed in the *Houston Chronicle* from March 1985 (when the *Chronicle* first began to computerize its files) to March 1997. Staff members at the *Chronicle* library using keyword searches of “Murders” and “Houston” conducted the search. The most recent years (1989 to the present) have the most complete coverage of homicides in Houston, providing stories on about 80 percent of the incidents reported by HPD. This database has been searched by suspect and victim name, street address, and date to match up with HPD data. The newspaper stories are used to complement the HPD data by providing context for how gang membership impacts homicide.

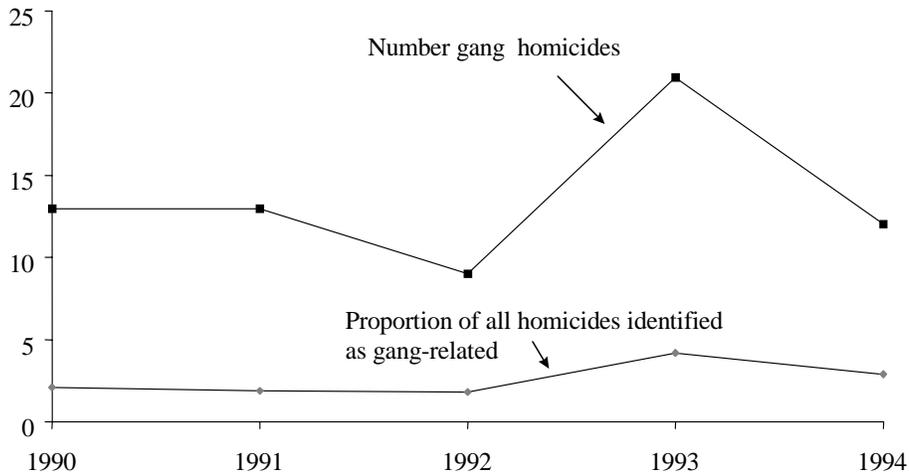
Results

Preliminary content analysis of the newspaper articles associated with the gang homicide data suggests that the HPD, similar to the LAPD, defines “gang” relatedness in a rather conservative fashion. That is, for a homicide to be labeled “gang-related,” there has to be gang members involved, although the question of “motivation” is not always addressed. The Houston Police Department labeled 70 homicides as gang-related from September 1989 to December 1994.

As shown in Figure 1, in the first full year of reporting (1990), they observed 13 gang homicides and by 1993, this number had peaked at 21. While the number dropped to 12 by 1994, there may have been as many as 16 gang-related homicides in 1996 (according to the *Houston Chronicle* data). Figure 1 also shows the proportion of homicides that the HPD linked to gang activity. It has averaged about 2.6 percent over the early 1990s, with a high of 4.6 percent in 1993. These figures suggest that Houston may not have a major gang-homicide problem. By comparison, about 29.5 percent of the homicides California during 1995 were classified as gang-related (Lungren 1996). If the *Chronicle* numbers for 1996 are valid, however, the proportion of homicides related to gang activity may have grown to over 5 percent (Houston experienced less than 300 homicides in 1996).

FIGURE 1.
NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF GANG HOMICIDES

Houston, Texas 1990-1994



In Table 1, we show the comparison of several variables of interest for gang and non-gang homicides in Houston for the 1990s. Since the HPD did not label any homicides as gang-related until late 1989, we only compare gang homicide to non-gang homicides that occurred during the same time frame (1990-1994, N = 2,642). As would be expected, individuals suspected of gang-related homicides are considerably younger on average than non-gang suspects (18.6 years compared to 28.2 years, respectively). What is more surprising is that 40 percent of the gang suspects are over the age of 18. This is still lower than for non-gang homicides where 72 percent of the suspects are over age 18.

In the cases where gender of the suspect was known (N=56), all of the gang suspects were males compared with 91 percent of the non-gang suspects. Most of the non-gang homicides (43.4 percent) were committed by African-American suspects (56 percent) followed by Hispanics (26 percent), Whites (16 percent), and Asians (1.7 percent). Hispanic suspects, on the other hand, committed most of the gang homicides (64.2 percent). This matches closely the findings for Chicago (Block 1991). The proportion of gang homicides by Asian offenders (7.1 percent) is over 4 times higher than for non-gang homicides. The disproportionate involvement of minorities in gang-related homicides is not surprising when we consider that the majority of gangs consist of minority group members (Klein 1995; Sanders 1994). Whites account for only about 10 percent of gang members nationwide, with Asians making up the third largest and most rapidly growing groups of gang members, behind African-Americans and Hispanics (Sheldon, Tracy, and Brown 1997). Over 40 percent of Latino male murderers in Chicago were involved in a gang (compared to 12 percent African-American and White murderers). Two-thirds of Chicago's gang-related homicides involved Latino male teenaged victims. In Los Angeles,

decreasing rates of African-American involvement in gang homicide was matched by increasing rates for Latino gang homicides (Reiner 1992).

The average gang-related homicide victim is younger (21 years old) than the non-gang victim (31 years) and male gang victims predominate. Among the gang-related homicides, Hispanics (45.7 percent) and Asians (10 percent) have much higher percentages than in non-gang homicides (28.4 percent and 2.6 percent, respectively). Only about one quarter of the gang victims are black compared to about one half of the non-gang victims. These numbers parallel the suspect numbers and exhibit the strong intra-racial component common in homicide studies. A striking feature of our data is the experience of Asians. All of the Asians who were killed in gang homicides were killed by Asians and all Asian gang suspects killed other Asians. In the non-gang homicides, only one third of the Asians were killed by other Asians. Thus, it appears that homicide related to Asian gang activity in Houston was limited to conflicts between rival gangs of the same race. The pattern is sustained for the other three race/ethnic groups as well.

The finding of high levels of intra-racial homicides among gangs is supported by the relationship between offender and victim. While over half of the gang homicides were committed by a stranger (when the relationship was known) compared to 36 percent for non-gang homicides, about the same amount of homicides for both gang and non-gang incidents were committed by non-family acquaintances. Homicides committed by acquaintances accounted for 38 percent of the gang homicides and 37 percent of the non-gang homicides. These findings highlight the notion that gang-related homicides in Houston were often incidents involving individuals who knew each other and were often of the same race/ethnicity.

Two other major differences between gang and non-gang homicides are shown in Table 1: premise and peak activity. That there are differences in the location of the homicides is not surprising. Forty percent of the gang homicides occurred on a street, in a park or in a parking lot compared to only 17 percent for non-gang homicides. One-fifth of the non-gang homicides occurred in a residence while only 7 percent of gang homicides were in a home. Some "residence" homicides for gang slayings may have been drive-by shootings or robbery incidents, though some occurred during a party at someone's house.

One of the more intriguing findings is the time of year of the gang homicides. There is no real pattern for the non-gang homicides as far as peak killing month. Each month has about the same amount of homicides, ranging from a low 6.9 percent in October to a high of 9.7 percent in July. Over 27 percent of the non-gang homicides occurred in the summer. Gang homicides, on the other hand, show a much more distinctive pattern. Over 31 percent of the gang homicides occurred in the months of October and November while only 22.8 percent occurred in the summer. The "slowest" months were March (1.4 percent) and December (4.3 percent), both months highlighted by major school breaks. This finding suggests that homicides associated with gang activity may be closely related to school, although few gang-related homicides

TABLE 1. GANG AND NON-GANG HOMICIDES IN HOUSTON (1990-1994).

Characteristics	Gang	Non-Gang
Suspect (when known):		
Age (mean and range)	18.6 (14-38)	28.2 (12-84)
% Male	100	90.9
% Asian	7.1	1.7
% African-American	21.4	56.0
% Hispanic	64.2	26.0
% White	7.1	16.4
	(N=56)	(N=2,050)
Victim:		
Age (mean and range)	21.0 (6-59)	31.3 (0-93)
% Male	92.9	83.8
% Asian	10.0	2.6
% African-American	27.1	49.2
% Hispanic	45.7	28.4
% White	17.1	19.6
	(N=70)	(N=2,642)
% Intra-Racial Homicide:		
Asian	100.0	33.9
African-American	83.3	71.0
Hispanic	61.1	56.4
White	50.0	38.0
	(N=56)	(N=2,050)
Relationship:		
% Acquaintance (non family)	37.8	36.9
% Stranger	56.6	35.6
Premise:		
% Street	40.0	17.0
% Residence	7.1	21.2
Peak Killing Months:		
	Oct. & Nov. (15.7% each) June, July, & Aug. (22.8%)	No pattern (Oct. 6.9%) June, July, & Aug. (27.4%)
% Not Cleared:		
	20.0 (14)	27.9 (737)

actually occurred at school. The following story of a homicide later determined to be gang-related by HPD reflects the possible impact of school relationships in the gang-homicide nexus:

Herbert Grant Jr., 18, and an Alief Hastings High School student fought after a pushing incident at a party Friday for about 75 students of Stratford High School, which Grant formerly attended. Homicide Sgt. James Yarbrough said Hastings and Alief Elsik high school students arrived at the party, causing friction. The party was held after Friday night's football game in which Hastings defeated Stratford 40-14. Grant played defensive tackle for Stratford last year. "The people involved in the incident wanted it to be a fair fight," Yarbrough said. "They only wanted Grant and the other student to fight, but it didn't end that way." Witnesses said William Silva, a Hastings dropout, pulled a gun during the fight and shot at the ground, then shot Grant once in the head (Perry 1990: C-11).

Another story three years later shows the extent to which school officials were concerned about gang violence.

As threats echoed between two westside gangs in the wake of a weekend killing, police and residents were preparing for the worst and hoping it was all just talk Monday. Joseph Cedric "C-Dog" Paddio Jr., a 16-year-old Elsik High School student, was beaten and shot to death Saturday night as he attended an unsupervised Halloween party. Paddio has been identified as a member of the Rolling 60s, a small gang of African-Americans. Paddio's alleged killer has been identified as a member of the Lords of Alief, a large Hispanic gang active in the same area. The Rolling 60s, saying they want revenge for Paddio's murder, have launched a campaign of threats. Callers identifying themselves as members of the Lords of Alief gang told the *Houston Chronicle* Monday their gang outnumbers the Rolling 60s by 100-to-1. One professed gang member said if the Rolling 60s retaliate, the Lords of Alief "won't just pay back, we'll exterminate them." Security at Elsik and Hastings high schools, where members of both gangs attend classes, was heavy Monday. Alief Independent School District spokeswoman Ann Spears said, with the exception of a couple of "staredowns" in the Elsik cafeteria at lunch, both campuses remained relatively calm. The beefed-up security included school district officers and extra patrols by the Houston Police Department, continued as classes were dismissed Monday afternoon (Bardwell and Milling 1993: A-11)

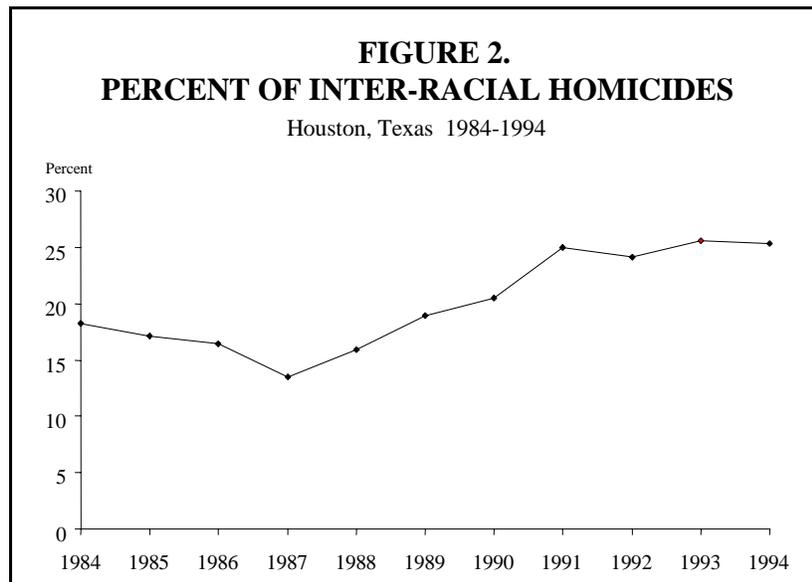
The shooting described above so heightened tensions among gang members at the high schools that officials rescheduled a football game between the two schools. The game, originally scheduled for a Friday night game, was played under increased security Saturday afternoon. Stories such as these help to explain the increased levels of gang homicides in October and November compared to the non-gang homicides.

Finally, the clearance rates for the two types of homicide are different. Only 20 of the gang homicides were still open or inactive compared to 28 percent for non-gang homicides. There are

three possible explanations for increased clearance rates for gang homicides. First, 84 percent of the gang homicides involved the use of some type of firearm compared to 71 percent for non-gang incidents. Cases involving firearm usage usually have higher clearance rates. Second, over half of the gang victims were under 18 years of age. Increased diligence on the part of police as a result of public uproar may result in greater effectiveness. Third, most gang homicides, by definition, involve a large number of witnesses (acquaintances of the victim and the suspect). The availability of witnesses increases greatly the likelihood that an arrest will be made.

While the HPD only began reporting gang activity as a motive in late 1989, there is certainly evidence in the Houston Chronicle data that suggests that gangs were active in Houston before the 1990s. Many gang homicide stories in the 1980s referred to prison gangs like the Mexican Mafia and the Texas Syndicate, both of which were actively involved in increases in prison homicide (Crouch and Marquart 1989). There were other isolated homicides, which appeared to be related to gang activity. In 1986, a group of young Asian men called the “Ghost Shadows” killed a man; in 1988, a man was killed when a group of 30 Hispanic youths fought near the convention center. In both instances, police denied that these were gang-related.

If we use the HPD definition of the beginning of gang homicides as 1989, however, we can create a “pre-gang” and “post-gang” comparison base to examine Houston homicide. Figure 2, for example, shows the percent of Houston homicides, which were inter-racial from 1984 to 1994 (based on incidents where the race of both the victim and the suspect are known). Clearly, inter-racial homicide fluctuated between 15 percent and 18 percent in the “pre-gang” era and then rose to around 25 percent in the “post-gang” period. Thus, increased gang activity may be related to increased violence between racial/ethnic groups.



The use of firearms as weapons in homicides is shown in Figure 3. There is a slight increase in the proportion of homicides involving firearms in general and handguns in particular from the “pre-gang” to the “post-gang” period. In 1992, 79 percent of all homicides in Houston involved the use of firearms, up from around 67 percent in the late 1980s. The pattern is the same for handguns. Gang homicide is often portrayed as involving the use of automatic weapons. Our data show that automatic weapons were used in 26 percent of the gang homicides involving firearms. Prior to 1989, all homicides involving handguns were coded “pistol.” Following that time, HPD provided more specific data, listing the type of firearm used. We show the proportion of homicides which involved the use of .45s, 9mms, automatic and semi-automatic rifles, and Uzis in Figure 3. The proportion rose quickly from 5 percent in 1989 to 15 percent in 1992 before leveling off. We do not know the extent to which this is an artifact of slowly changing reporting procedures or true increases, so these results should be interpreted cautiously.

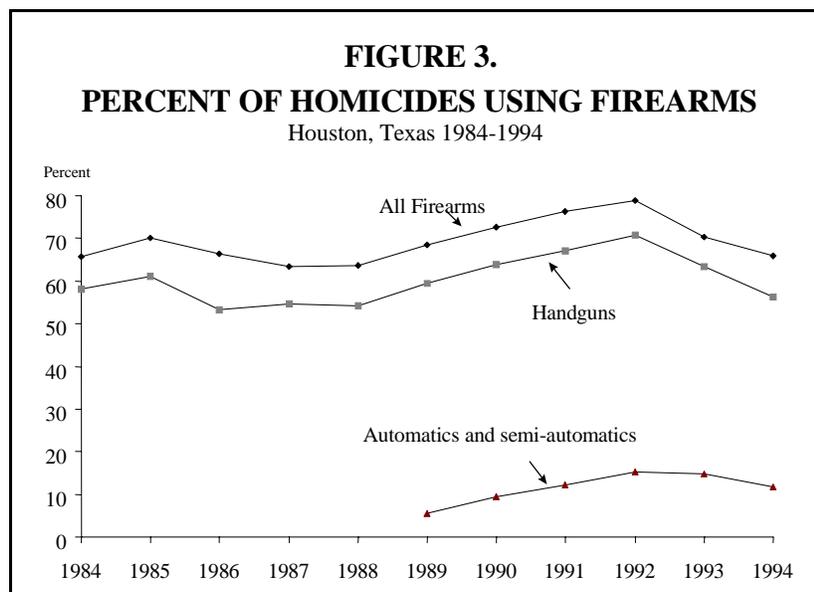
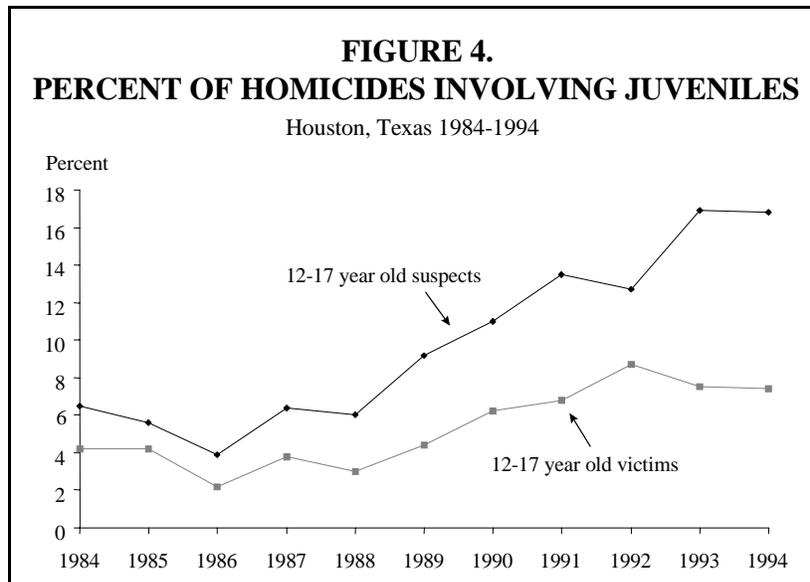


Figure 4 shows the proportion of homicides involving juvenile suspects (between 12 and 17) and juvenile victims (under 18). The percent of suspects whose age was known increased rapidly in the “post-gang” period, from around 6 percent in the mid-1980s to about 14 percent in the early 1990s. The proportion appears to make its ascent around 1987, which might be the true beginning of gang involvement in homicide. Since gang members often kill people much like themselves, the juvenile victim rate follows the pattern of the suspect rate. The proportion of victims under 18 that were murdered in the late 1980s averaged less than 4 percent. By 1992, the proportion had doubled to about 8 percent.



Discussion

Fear of gang violence seems to do little to deter involvement of young people. The attraction of gang involvement for students may be best observed in the following excerpt following a gang slaying.

Several students gathered outside the school Monday afternoon stopped short of condemning gang involvement. If you are a gang member “you’re protected no matter what,” Gomez said. “You know if you’re killed, you won’t be humiliated. They’re going to get them back ... like two for one.” As he began walking across the schoolyard, Gomez said: “Hell, you’re going to die sooner or later anyway.” (Bardwell and Milling 1993: A-11)

As gangs become more a part of life in the city, they impact every facet of our existence. The fear of violence they engender is highlighted by the homicides we see portrayed on the nightly

news and morning paper. This paper has shown how gang activity has changed the nature of homicide in Houston since the mid-1980s. Houston's gang homicide problem is not as great as that witnessed in California in the past two decades but it appears to be increasing. This relatively low percentage is surprising given Houston's past record of high homicide rates (Brewer and Damphousse 1997). Like other studies, we found that most gang homicides involve public incidents, with young males and Hispanics (far more than for non-gang homicides) and that most gang homicides are intra-racial. An exception to this finding is the increasing level of inter-racial homicides over the same period that gang behavior is thought to have flourished. This increase may reflect greater racial tension in increasingly heterogeneous neighborhoods. Perhaps the most striking findings are those of "relationship" and "time-of-year." It seems clear that gang homicides often involved individuals who knew one another and the homicide pattern followed the school calendar (peaking in the late Fall and declining during Winter and Spring breaks).

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Today's Music And Youth Violence

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“Gangsta rap” music has been criticized for its glorification of graphic violence, misogynic messages, and hate-filled ideology. Fear has been expressed that these lyrics incite youths to engage in violent acts. “Gangsta rap” needs to be examined in the context of a society that has become increasingly saturated with violence. Several cases in which violent music lyrics appeared to provide the additional impetus needed for unbonded youths to engage in violent acts are highlighted. Proposals for censorship ignore the real factors underlying why millions of youths listen to this music. Fromm’s theory of malignant aggression is presented as a framework to understand the fascination of some individuals and cultures with acts of cruelty and destructiveness.

A Society Saturated With Violence

“Destroy all girls.” That’s what the slogan advised. It was carefully placed on the laundry-instructions inside thousands of pants, boxer shorts, T-shirts, and sweat shirts marketed to young male teenagers. One mother who was washing her son’s T-shirt did not like it and complained to the sporting goods store where she had purchased it. Her actions produced dramatic results. The store discontinued the clothing line and a national debate ensued.

What’s all the fuss about? The manufacturers defended the practice as a sales gimmick to attract aggressive young male adolescent buyers. The company had considered the slogan “Kill your parents,” but apparently decided that “Destroy all girls” would generate more sales. One company spokesperson dismissed the possibility of the slogan leading to acts of violence against girls as “a bit too ridiculous” (“Retailer pulls apparel with offensive slogan,” 1997).

The slogan in context

Is this issue worth worrying about? Do violent words incite youths to engage in violent behavior? Proponents of free speech argue that the slogan, in and of itself, is harmless. The slogan, however, does not exist in and of itself; it appears in the context of a society that has become saturated with violence in recent years (Heide, 1997b). Films and television shows, including the evening news, have become increasingly violent over the last two decades (Levin and Fox, 1985; Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 1991; Fox and Levin, 1994). Experts estimate that, on the average, youths in the United States watch 45 violent acts on television every day, with most of them committed with handguns (Myers, 1992). An American Psychological Association study confirmed that children who view two to four hours of television violence daily will see 8,000 murders and 100,000 other acts of violence before finishing elementary school (Wheeler, 1993). If the viewing period is extended to the late teens, these youths will have observed about 200,000 violent acts. These figures may be even higher for youths who watch cable programs and R-rated movies on home VCRs (Sleek, 1994).

Research spanning more than 30 years indicates that exposure to television violence is related to violent behavior (Wheeler, 1993). For example, studies have found that aggressive children who have difficulty in school and in relating to peers tend to watch more television (Sleek, 1994). In addition, adolescent deviance and decreased inhibitions to violence have been correlated to witnessing violence (Prothrow-Stith and Weissman, 1991).

Perhaps, even more alarming than the thousands of children watching violent programs are the large numbers of youths who witness violence first hand in their neighborhoods, schools, and homes. The exposure to violence among inner-city youths is especially astounding (Jenkins and Bell, 1994). In a 1992 study, 203 African-American students in a public high school in an inner city Chicago community were surveyed. The area in which the school was located had a long-established reputation as a poor and violent area. It had ranked third in homicides during the year the study was conducted. Among these youths, 80 percent of whom qualified for some type of public assistance, 43 percent reported that they had seen a killing, and 59 percent reported that someone close to them had been killed. The percentages of adolescents who reported exposure to shootings were even higher: 66 percent knew someone close to them who had been shot, 61 percent had witnessed a shooting, and 48 percent had been shot-at themselves (Bell, 1994).

To many of today's young people, the world is a violent place. This image is particularly glamorized in the music known as "gangsta rap." Rappers, such as Ice T, Tu Pac, Spice One, MC8, Eightball and MJG, and Geto Boys sing about robbing, raping, and killing which they claim is part of everyday life in "the hood" for low-income members of society, particularly African-Americans. The lyrics in "gangsta rap" music, similar to the scenes in televised violence, would seem likely to have a disinhibiting and desensitizing effect on individuals who listen to them repeatedly. Although the correlation between "gangsta rap" music and violence has not been established, recent research has provided some empirical evidence that misogynous (hate-filled) rap music was related to sexually aggressive behavior by men against women (Barongan and Hall, 1995).

Unbonded Youths And Gangsta Rap

When I was growing up, my friends and I chanted, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Unfortunately, these lyrics are not true for many young Americans in the 1990s. In today's society words can and do provide the springboard for some youths to kill. In several of my recent cases, violent music lyrics appeared to provide the additional impetus needed for unbonded youths to kill (Heide, 1997a).⁷

⁷ The cases of Donnell and Tommy originally appeared in a 1997 editorial entitled "Killing Words" written by the author and published in the International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 4,(1): 3-8.

The case of Donnell

Donnell, a handsome 17-year-old African-American youth, was charged with three armed robberies of convenience stores and two homicides in connection with them. In all three of these incidents, the youth allegedly fired shots from his handgun. In the last two incidents, Donnell reportedly fired directly at a store clerk in each of the stores, killing both of them. The State indicted the adolescent as an adult with multiple charges, including two counts of first degree murder, and announced its intention to seek the death penalty. Prior to trial, a plea agreement was reached, wherein Donnell avoided a possible death sentence by agreeing to plead guilty to two counts of second degree murder and one count of armed robbery.

Prior to the sentencing hearing, defense counsel contacted me for assistance in gaining understanding of their client and his involvement in these crimes. Defense counsel related that Donnell had been raised for most of his life in a Christian home by his grandparents, who were known to be stable and good-valued people. His grandfather was a hardworking man, who provided well for his family. My evaluation verified that Donnell had his own room at his grandparents' home and was essentially raised as an only child by grandparents who loved and doted on him. He lived a middle-to-upper-middle-class life. The family lived in a beautiful home on about five acres of land with a pool, tennis court, and basketball court. A boy who had a college fund set up for him and a family business to go into was robbing and killing people. The obvious question was "why"?

Thorough assessment in the case of Donnell revealed a confluence of factors that contributed to his violent behavior. Donnell's personality development was low. He had not reached the level of personality development where he could see that he was accountable for his behavior and that he had choices. Rather, he thought and acted like a much younger child (Heide, 1992, 1997a).

Donnell's restricted personality development was partly due to the chaotic nature of his first few years of life. Donnell experienced early abandonment by both his biological parents and repeated breaks in the bonding process. It is questionable whether he ever bonded to anyone, including the grandparents who loved him dearly. There was evidence to suggest that during the short time that he lived with his mother, Donnell might have been neglected and possibly abused.

As a young adolescent, Donnell lived in several households with different ways of relating and standards for behavior, and did not learn responsible behavior. He spent a short stay with his mother when he was about 14. During the two-to-three years preceding his arrest for the robbery/homicides, Donnell was living with his father, who was abusing cocaine. While staying with his father, Donnell rarely went to school. He associated increasingly with delinquent youths who lived in low income neighborhoods known to be violent and was arrested for delinquent behavior on a few occasions. Although it was clear to the family, to the school, and to the juvenile justice system that Donnell needed help, no meaningful intervention occurred.

In addition to the low personality development and unfavorable influences in his early childhood and adolescence, psychological testing revealed that Donnell was of dull-normal intelligence. Donnell also had some brain damage, which appeared to have been present from birth.

During his middle adolescence, Donnell also became heavily involved in listening to “gangsta rap” music. The messages in the songs clearly influenced him. When I listened to several recordings after speaking with Donnell, I discovered that some of the responses that he gave to my questions were lyrics from the songs. For example, when I asked Donnell how come he shot the clerk immediately upon entering the store, he replied that he had gotten “trigga happy,” one of the recordings sung by the rapper known as Spice One.

The case of Tommy

I was retained by defense counsel to evaluate 14-year-old Tommy, the younger of two white brothers charged with killing their parents, prior to the Court’s ruling on the State’s motion to transfer this boy to adult court. Tommy, similar to Donnell, appeared to have been an unbonded and low maturity youth, who idealized his older brother Bill. Psychological testing revealed no apparent pathology.

My evaluation and extensive corroborative data strongly suggested that Bill had pressured Tommy into participating in the double homicide. Tommy related that he listened to “mainly hard core rap music” after Bill introduced him to it. When asked, he named Spice One, Lynch Mob, Ice Cube, ODB, Method Man, Cypress Hill, Wu Tang, and 2 Pac as groups to which they listened.

I was unable to evaluate Bill due to the apparent conflict of interest. Several of Bill’s friends told police that Bill had become increasingly preoccupied with guns, gangs, and killings in the months preceding the murders. They related that Bill was heavily absorbed in “gangsta rap” and was “a wigger.” He had a fascination with guns and drive-by shootings, and was trying to join a gang. He allegedly bragged he could get a gun if he wanted one. Bill reportedly said on several occasions that prison was the way to go and that he expected to wind up in jail. Bill told one friend that if he killed his parents “it would be for the money.” Tommy indicated that Bill emptied his parents’ safe, which contained several hundred dollars during the homicidal incident.

The case of Dwight

Dwight, a 17-year-old boy was referred for a competency and sanity evaluation. He had allegedly kidnapped a small child, beaten her severely, and attempted to rape her. He stopped the vicious attack upon the victim when he heard voices approaching and fled. Dwight was another low maturity, unbonded youth. Consultation with his parents revealed a significant medical history. Dwight was deprived of oxygen at birth, was diagnosed as having attention deficit hyperactive disorder, was dyslexic, and had a history of epilepsy.

In addition to medical trauma, clinical interviews with Dwight and his parents indicated that both parents emotionally neglected Dwight. Dwight's father did not have much interaction with his son when he was a child. Dwight's mother was emotionally unavailable to Dwight for the first seven years of his life because of her mental illness.

Dwight was a victim of emotional incest. He was expected to take on a parent-type role in the sense of caretaking for his mother, who had a serious medical condition, as well as a significant mental health history. Dwight, as a young child, witnessed extreme forms of violence initiated by his mother. These acts undermined his sense of safety and trust in his environment.

Dwight had few accomplishments of which he could be proud. He had difficulty maintaining passing grades in his special education classes and dropped out. His abilities at sports were noticeably compromised by his neurological problems. He had difficulty making friends and never had a girlfriend. He had some familiarity with gangs, more as "a wannabe" than as a gang member.

There was one area where Dwight had gained some proficiency. He did have extensive knowledge of "gangsta rap" music and was pleased by his ability to remember these songs and to sing them. He acknowledged that he had a good memory for auditory learning.

Dwight listened to Tu Paq, Snoop Doggy Dog, Coolio, 69 Boys and 12 Gauge. Dwight played the cassette called "Doggy Style" by Snoop Doggy Dog often at home. He described the eleven songs on the album and was able to provide the words to them. His favorite song was a song called "Gin and Juice," which was interesting because the only hard liquor that he reported liking was gin and he drank it with juice. Dwight was able to sing this song for me. He knew the words, the beat, and the harmony. He said in this song Snoop was telling people how to live life. The ladies in the song were portrayed like "bitches, like trash." Snoop would have sex with them and throw them away.

Dwight indicated he got into gangster rap late in the seventh grade when he was about thirteen. Prior to this time he had been into "heavy metal" music during the fifth and sixth grades. His favorite song was "Runaway Train" by Soul Asylum, which was dedicated to kids who ran away or were kidnapped.

Theoretical And Policy Implications

Clinical case studies such as those above are essential in generating hypotheses about the causes of and solutions to particular problems and, on occasion, in providing disconfirming evidence for a prevailing hypothesis (Rosenhan and Seligman 1989). They also serve to enhance understanding of particular individuals (See e.g., Wertham 1941; Reinhardt 1970; Gardiner 1985; Leyton 1990; Heide 1992). Causation cannot be determined with the case study method, however, because this method investigates only individuals who have a particular problem or fall into a particular category -- in this case, adolescents arrested for serious violent crimes -- and does not focus on those who do not (Rosenhan and Seligman 1989).

It is important to note that millions of youths are exposed to the words of “gangsta rap” every day. Of this large number, some will become absorbed in the messages and the lifestyle. The number who are propelled by these words into violent behavior is unknown.

The case studies of Donnell, Tommy, and Dwight suggest that youths who are most likely to be influenced to take action by violent words are those who believe that they have little or nothing left to lose. Children and teens who would appear to be at higher risk of being negatively effected by “gangsta rap” are the kids who are angry, frequently in pain, and too often unattached due to experiences in their home and neighborhood environments. Despite their often cool veneer, they lack self esteem and often the inner and outer resources to improve their lives. They do not hold conventional values or dreams. Often chronically bored, they frequently use drugs and alcohol to anesthetize themselves and commit crimes impulsively. They live in the moment. To them, thrills -- and lives -- are cheap.

In recent years, politicians from both the Democratic and Republican parties have expressed concern over the violent themes reflected in the record and movie industries. Political figures have called for more societally responsible programming with the threat of censorship looming on the horizon if the warning goes unheeded. Censorship alone ignores the real factors underlying why some young listeners turn to violent behavior. It is a quick fix solution that avoids significant societal examination and change.

Fromm’s theory of malignant aggression

Erich Fromm (1973) took a comprehensive look at the phenomena of violent behavior approximately 25 years ago. He identified a type of aggression that is specifically a human phenomenon. He called this unique type of destructiveness “malignant aggression” because it is biologically non-adaptive. Fromm theorized that some individuals and cultures seem to be driven by a “passion” rooted within their individual and collective “characters” to destroy members of their own species when there exists no rational gain, either biological or economic, to be accrued from such destructive behavior.

Fromm’s theory of malignant aggression provides a theoretical framework in which to view acts of cruelty and destructiveness. It can be used to investigate research questions and to formulate policy decisions. Although “gangsta rap” did not exist when Fromm was conceptualizing his theory, the attraction that it holds for many youths today is easily explained by Fromm’s work.

Fromm maintained that human beings have existential needs, as well as physiological needs. He specifically identified five existential needs: frame of orientation and an object of devotion, rootedness, unity, effectiveness, and excitation and stimulation. He argued persuasively that one of the possible answers to the existential needs is destructiveness. Fromm’s theory of malignant aggression is concerned with the identification of various “passions” within an individual’s character that are associated with constructive and destructive responses to these existential needs. Discussion of these needs suggests that certain individuals are more likely to be influenced by the violent and misogynistic messages in “gangsta rap” than others.

According to Fromm, every human being needs a map of the world and a focal point. Individuals who have a frame of orientation are able to act purposely and consistently. Those who do not have this blueprint feel confused and unsettled. The need for a frame of orientation is so intense that people who lack this map can be highly suggestible and succumb to irrational doctrines. These individuals are at increased risk of joining cults and following the precepts and behavior without discernment.

An object of devotion is closely related to one's frame of orientation. It is the goal to which an individual's strives. A constructive frame of orientation could be making a positive difference in this world, being all that one can be, or approaching life as a series of lessons to learn and master. Objects of devotion consistent with making a positive difference in this world could be selected from one's work, family, or community involvement. For example, a youth could decide to become a physician and aspire to discover a cure for AIDS; another could desire to raise his or her children as good valued, contributing members of society; and still another could choose to get politically involved to work towards eradicating discrimination and helping the poor (Fromm, 1973).

Youths who embrace the messages in "gangsta rap" are at greater risk of adopting a destructive frame of orientation and a related object of devotion. Youths who habitually listen to "gangsta rap" are likely to view the world as a dangerous place, to see women in a disparaging way, and to perceive extensive alcohol and illicit drug use as desirable. As in the case of Donnell, they may actively choose to become a gangster and to engage in violent behavior, such as robbing and killing other people.

Fromm maintained that human beings have an intense need to feel a sense of rootedness. They desire to undo the feeling of separateness that originates with separation from mother's womb at birth. Individuals who are independent and productive are capable of truly loving other people. Fromm argued that those who lack the foundation to forge healthy alliances are more likely to be involved in symbiotic, narcissistic, or destructive relationships (Fromm, 1973). "Gangsta rap" music extols these types of unhealthy relationships. This type of rap music encourages symbiotic relationships by portraying males as controlling females in sadistic-masochistic patterns. The lyrics reinforce narcissism by proclaiming that what the gangster wants is his to take. Many songs openly promote destructiveness through words that relate that the gangster destroys others, particularly women, who have no further use to him or who get in his way.

Fromm explained that people also have a need to feel a sense of unity with themselves, with others, and with the environment. One can achieve this sense of peace in a constructive way by developing human reason and loving others. Fromm identified several negative ways that individuals can attain this sense of unity. They can anesthetize their consciousness with alcohol and drugs and compulsive involvement in some activities, such as sex. They can become over-identified with one's social role to the point that they simply react and no longer think or feel about what they are doing. They can subordinate all their energies to one all-consuming passion, such as the passion for destructiveness, power, or fame (Fromm, 1973). "Gangsta rap"

encourages these types of behaviors by extolling substance abuse and sexual excess. It entices youth to lose themselves by adopting the glorified life of a gangster. The role of the gangster is glamorized in a way that could lead adolescents to develop a craving for the gangster's perceived power, his notoriety, and his thirst for destructiveness.

Human beings also have a need to effect; they need to feel that they can impact on other people and on the environment. Fromm explained that individuals can effect others through love or through fear and suffering. Similarly, they can relate to things in a constructive or destructive way. According to Fromm, the feeling that one is ineffective as a human being is a very painful and difficult experience. "Man will do almost anything to overcome it, from drug and work addiction, to cruelty and murder" (p. 265). Youths who are most likely to embrace the messages of "gangsta rap" are those who lack accomplishments in more constructive arenas. Youths who are doing poorly in school, are uninvolved in sports or other extracurricular activities, are unemployed, and do not have a steady mate are at greater risk of succumbing to these messages than youths who are doing well in school and in their communities.

Fromm stated that people have a need for excitation and stimulation. He explained that there are two types of stimuli: simple and activating. Simple stimuli are neurophysiologically-based and almost reflex-like. The individual "reacts" to them rather than consciously deliberating. He runs away, attacks, or becomes sexually excited. After repeated exposure to simple stimuli, people become habituated to them and stop reacting. Accordingly, human beings will no longer react to these stimuli when they are repeated beyond a certain threshold unless intensified or changed in content. When habituation occurs to a violent stimulus, for example, more intense violent behaviors are needed for the viewers' bodies to react and to register physiological indicators of distress (Fromm, 1973; Donnerstein, 1984; Donnerstein, Linz, and Penrod 1987; Solomon, Schmidt, and Ardragna, 1990).

Activating stimuli require more involvement from the person. A poem, a musical composition, a written report, an architectural design or a landscaping project, for example, require more of a response from an individual. Stimuli of this type invite the person to become active and to put forth an effort. Activating stimuli are always changing because human beings are acting upon them. People who are striving for a goal are responding to activating stimuli; those who are driven to respond to some event are responding to simple stimuli.

Fromm maintained that modern society was overwrought with simple stimuli and that the media was largely responsible. His words, published close to 25 years ago, are even more true today. "Contemporary life in industrial society operates almost entirely with such simple stimuli. What is stimulated are such drives as sexual desire, greed, sadism, destructiveness, narcissism; these stimuli are mediated through movies, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the commodity market" (p. 270).

Fromm hypothesized that human beings' need for stimulation and excitation is one of the primary factors responsible for acts of destructiveness and cruelty. He argued that it is much easier for people to get excited by anger, rage, cruelty, and the urge to destroy than by

constructive interest and love. In contrast to constructive behaviors, Fromm pointed out that one does not need patience, discipline, critical thinking, concentration, and frustration tolerance to engage in acts of cruelty and destructiveness (Fromm, 1973). Opportunities to vent negative emotions and to behave destructively are immediately available in the United States, with its easy access to handguns and more sophisticated weapons of destruction.

Boredom and chronic depression are closely related to stimulation. Fromm explained that there are three types of persons. The first type is capable of responding to activating stimuli and is rarely bored. The second type is chronically bored, but is able to compensate for his boredom by availing himself of frequently changing simple stimuli, such as drinking, doing drugs, having sex, watching TV, and going to parties. The third type, also chronically bored, is unable to obtain excitement by normal stimulation and is most likely to turn to acts of cruelty and destructiveness.

Fromm related that genuine acts of malignant aggression can take two forms. Spontaneous acts, such as those that occur in wartime or in vengeance, are less of concern than character-rooted acts of malignant aggression. Spontaneous acts of malignant aggression are typically isolated and infrequent acts that occur under extreme conditions unlikely to be repeated. Character-rooted acts of malignant aggression are more pernicious because, as the name suggests, they are rooted in an individual's personality.

Fromm identified two character structures that threaten human health and survival: the sadistic and necrophilous. The sadistic character engages in acts of cruelty to demonstrate power and control. The necrophilous character is further along the continuum of destructiveness. A person with this character structure is excited by death and destructiveness. Fromm used the term necrophilia in the broad sense of destructiveness; sexual necrophilia would be among the most extreme perversions that might be committed by someone with this character structure (Fromm, 1973).

The messages in "gangsta rap" are of the simple stimuli variety. As discussed above, they advocate substance abuse, partying, and compulsive sex. Power and control are recurring themes. Avenues to achieve power and control include acts of human cruelty and destructiveness. Some of the "gangstas" portrayed in these songs could easily fit Fromm's sadistic character; others, his necrophilous category.

About 10 percent of the 90 juvenile murderers whom I have evaluated truly seemed to enjoy telling me about their murderous activities. Their acts of destructiveness seemed to be characterological. These adolescents laughed heartily as they recounted the homicidal events and related that they experienced the victim's dying gestures as "funny."

My clinical experiences with homicidal youths have indicated that the best source of data in uncovering this destructive pattern, however, was not typically the adolescents' description of their homicidal activities. Many youths were understandably guarded in their accounts of the murders. Due to the depth of my clinical interviews and the broad array of topics explored, unguarded remarks made about seemingly "innocuous" material provided invaluable data

regarding sadistic and destructive character traits. These content areas include music and movie preferences, as well as girlfriends, pets, activities, and careers.

Youths with these destructive traits would often become animated as they related incidents when they scared others by catching them off-guard, intimidated others by their persona, beat others badly, and destroyed other living things, such as dogs, cats, and lizards. Along these lines, one of the youths above related that he would like to be a mortician when he got older because he finds death “funny sometimes and just interesting.” When probed, this youth recalled really enjoying a movie where people died from doing “stupid things,” such as bungee jumping. The idea of being a mortician was appealing to this boy because he explained that they make a lot of money, that people are always dying, and that he has always been fascinated by death.

In summary, “gangsta rap” is likely to fill a void for some youths today. For those youths who are drifting aimlessly, the life of a gangster can provide a way to live (a frame of orientation) and a goal of “being somebody” (object of devotion). The music tells youths how to relate to others in symbiotic and destructive ways (rootedness) and how to anesthetize consciousness through drugs, alcohol, sex, partying (unity). It provides reinforcement for engaging in fun, exciting and destructive activities that require little effort (simple stimuli) as a way to impact on society (need to effect). It advocates sadistic and destructive acts as viable ways to achieve power and control in human relationships in today’s world.

Banning “gangsta rap” is not going to stem the tide of adolescent destructiveness, which has increased dramatically since the mid 1980s. A society responding to the challenges faced by today’s youths is needed. “Gangsta rap” appears to provide a way for some youths to meet the five existential needs identified by Fromm. Parents, the educational system, communities, government leaders, medical and mental health professionals, the media, and individuals must join together to find meaningful and effective ways for adolescents in the 1990s to fulfill their existential needs (Heide, 1996, 1997b).

As we rapidly approach the millennium, several questions need to be answered in this regard: Why do millions of kids listen to this music? How come fantasies of cruelty and destructiveness are attractive to youths from the mainstream of society as well as from its margins? Do these violent lyrics, perhaps, fill some cathartic need for some of these youths? For example, does listening to “gangsta rap” drain off stress for some well-positioned and committed youths who embrace the core culture and feel pressured to succeed? And most importantly, what direction and guidance can we as adults provide to increase the likelihood that kids today will choose constructive blueprints for life, positive goals, healthy relationships, and moral ways to effect others and to live their lives?

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Area Research on Homicide: Discussion Notes

Lin Huff-Corzine, University of Central Florida

In this final session of our 1997 Homicide Research Working Group workshop, there were three papers presented. As one might expect, fewer people were in attendance at this session. Nonetheless, the presentations were excellent and the discussion lively. Darrell Cheatwood, organizer, allowed questions following each paper rather than wait until the end of the time period.

“Comparing Apples to Oranges to Lemons: Reconciling Historical Homicide Data” by Vance McLaughlin examines recorded homicides in Savannah for 1896-1903 and 1986-1993. As part of his opening, McLaughlin made two statements many of us may be able to relate to and which I feel compelled to include here: “WILL WORK FOR DATA” and “LET THE STREETS RUN RED WITH BLOOD, I’M DOING RESEARCH.” Anybody need a new office door sign?

His presentation focused on the inconsistencies among his data sources and the difficulties researchers often face when trying to verify homicide events. In addition, some comments were made about specific findings.

Questions and comments from the audience arose primarily in relationship to specific findings. Dick Block pointed out that in historical studies of Omaha and other western towns, the same pattern of police killings were found as in McLaughlin’s examination of Savannah. If a police officer is killed, it most likely happens within one year of joining the force and in the more dangerous parts of town, near brothels, on wharfs, etc. According to McLaughlin, likely assignments for newer officers are located in the less desirable enforcement areas. One could argue as well that these newer hires also have the least experience and are therefore more likely to make deadly mistakes. Roland Chilton followed with a question about the race of offenders and victims. McLaughlin asserted that there was a one-third decrease in the rate of killing among whites between the earlier and later time periods. Among blacks, the number of both offenders and victims increased, but once “drug homicides” are controlled for, there is no significant difference between the two time periods.

Next, Anne Lee presented “Marital Status and Homicide.” A true demographer, Lee offered the audience more numbers relating homicide to marital status than we could even begin to digest in the few minutes of discussion allotted for this purpose. Specifically, Lee pointed out that compared to earlier demographic studies (1939-41 and 1959-61), homicide and other mortality data by marital status allowed researchers to examine race, sex, and age of victims beginning in 1981. Thus, her presentation focused on these differences. In this report, I will include questions, interpretations and insights that are most closely linked to improving data or that may stimulate further research.

Consistent with other research, it appears that women who live with men have a higher rate of homicide. Marital status, which includes “never married,” “married,” “separated,” and “divorced,” however, does not provide a complete picture of marital-like relationships. To examine this in more depth, we need to know about co-habiting partners and common-law marriages as well. As Roland Chilton pointed out women were more “sheltered” by fathers, brothers and other male relatives even if they never married in 1949-51. Research focusing on the victim-offender relationship might shed new light on why women are killed by comparing the older and newer data used in Lee’s paper. We also need some operationalization of “independence” or “autonomy,” perhaps using economic measures to help us better understand the differences between homicide rates for women reported in the earlier and more recent data sets. Certainly, as our discussion indicated, women of the 1990s are more likely to have better incomes and more independence than they were 40 or more years ago and they are more likely to divorce. But there are some nuances that we did not debate. For example, we are assuming that women feel more independent now and that they divorce for that reason. But just because women now make more money does not mean it directly influences their perceptions of autonomy or independence. In addition, we did not discuss the influence of how long people were married. Even 40 years ago, people did not live as long so life-long marriage commitments may have involved fewer years which could reduce the chance of divorce irrespective of other factors like religion, spousal roles in the family or women’s perceptions of independence. Dick Block may have been trying to get at the length (or one’s expectations about the length) of marriages when he questioned the possible influence of maternal mortality on women’s homicide rates. Could it be that death related to childbirth could mask women’s risk of homicide in the earlier data sets, 1939-41 and 1959-61?

A final question that could lead to further research was raised by Becky Block. As she noted, if someone a person is close to and live with dies, risk of death for that person increases. Often, this finding has been explained away by asserting that the survivor loses their will to live. But true to her spatial interests, Block asks if it could indicate the general risk of the area in which they live. Research examining homicide among the elderly may lend support to this argument in that most find the elderly are more likely to be killed in their own homes and by strangers. Examining the marital status of elderly homicide victims and the spatial distribution of these events could shed even more light on this intriguing question.

The final paper, “Homicide in Australia,” was presented by Peter Grabosky. Fortunate for those living in Australia, the homicide rate is much lower there than in the U.S., but this could also be fortunate for studies of homicide as well. In Australia, they have begun collecting data on 47 variables which could be related to the homicide event so our discussion, just as the possible research which could be done using such a vast array of data, became detective-like in our search for causes of homicide.

Knowing that Australia has strict gun control laws, Jay Corzine asked about the type of weapons used in homicides. Over the last half century or so, it seems that only about 3% of homicides are committed with handguns compared to over 50% in the U.S. Lois Mock asked about if percent of all homicides that are women has been significantly increasing since 1989 or if this is due to

increasing homicide rates in general. The former seems to be the case with women representing 40% of Australia's homicide victims, but there are no clear answers why at this time. Finally, Dick Block asked about the urban/rural distribution of homicides in Australia. Grabosky said that homicide is much more of a rural than urban phenomenon and believed this may be explained by a variety of factors including the reluctance of some jurisdictions to restrict access to guns as completely as others and the profound social disadvantages of certain groups, especially those of Aboriginal ancestry, who are concentrated in rural areas.

Appendix A Agenda

HRWG 1997 Intensive Workshop
Theme: The Policy/Practice/Research Connection
May 27, 1997

June 8

6:30–9:00 p.m.
Reception and Discussion Led by David Kennedy—What Works

June 9

7–8
Breakfast in the Dining Room

8–8:15
Hello

8:15–10:50
Theme Session 1: Building Bridges Between Research and Practice, Youth Violence Prevention

This session, features four collaborations between theory/ research and policy/practice in youth violence. What unique perspectives and skills are required of researchers and practitioners in bridging the gaps and building linkages, what are the barriers to establishing these linkages, and how can they be surmounted? Meeting participants will have a chance to “kick the tires” of four collaborations, asking them how they did it, the problems and how they overcame them, the results of their interventions, and what steps can or should be taken to disseminate these prevention models and integrate them into public policy.

Organized and moderated by Lois Mock (NIJ), Linda Dahlberg (CID), and Bob Flewelling (RTI).

Collaborators

Rich Rosenfeld and Troy Miles, Americorp, from a high risk youth mentoring program in St. Louis

Anthony Braga or David Kennedy and Lt. Gary French from the Boston collaborative youth violence prevention project

Don Faggiani and Colleen McLaughlin, who report on a brief intervention model being applied to youthful violent injury patients

Peter Greenwood will wear two hats in his discussion of the California Wellness Foundation

10:50–11:00

Break

11–12:30

Violent Offenders-Motives and History

Moderator- James Trudeau

Garen Wintemute- Prior Criminal History and Other Determinants of Later Criminal Activity among Authorized Purchasers of Handguns

Everett Lee- Infanticides Related to Characteristics of Parents

Range Hustson, Diedre Anglin, Sgt John Yarbrough, Jared Strote, Michael Canter, Kimberly Hardaway- “Law Enforcement Forced Assisted Suicide or Suicide by Cop” LA data on situations in which a suicidal person provokes the police into killing him.

Henry Brownstein- “Prior Experience with Drugs and Violence of Young People Under Custody for Homicide” Preliminary findings from two studies involving interviews with boys and girls under custody for homicide.

12:30–1:45

Lunch and Business Session

1:45–2:50

The Rewarding and Painful Process of Collaboration to Prevent Domestic Violence

Jackie Campbell, Carolyn Rebecca Block, Deborah Spungen and Linda Langford

This workshop is focused on the advantages, disadvantages, problems, and opportunities of collaborative intimate violence research. It brings together four projects in which collaboration between research and practitioners, academics and policy makers, public health and public safety agencies, and/or community-level and federal or state entities is a central component.

2:50–3:00

Break

3:00–5:00

Demo/Poster/Literature Session

Joel Garner Session Coordinator

Presenters so far:

John Firman, IACP; The Two Richmonds: An Implementation of the Recommendations of

Murder in America Summit Report

Skip Sigmon- How to use NCJRS

Kaye Marz: How to use Nat. Archive of CJ Data

Victoria Brewer, Kelly R. Damphousse, and Derek Paulsen

A Comparison of U.S. and Canadian Findings on Uxoricide Risk for Women and Children Sired by Previous Partners

Orest Fedorowicz, Statistics Canada- The Canadian Homicide Data Set

Pamela Lattimore- NIJ Update: Homicide Changes in Eight Cities

Jiafang Chen: Weapons Used in Homicide 1920–1991: Changing Patterns by Ethnicity, Sex, Age, and Region

Richard Block: Firearms Ownership and Firearms Victimization: A Comparison of Nine Western Industrialized Societies in the International Crime Victim Survey-1996

6–9:00

Dinner and Round Table Discussions

Dinner Roundtables: At dinner on Monday. For those of you who were asking form more person-to-person discussion time, this is a chance to hold a nitty-gritty focused discussion with a few (5–10) other interested people over dinner. It is not a presentation session. (But one person can get the discussion ball rolling).

Topics:

Linda Langford: Issues in Homicide Case Definition from a Study of Domestic Homicide

June 10

7:30–8:30 a.m.

Breakfast in the Dining Room

8:30–10:15

The Brady Act: Evaluation Consideration and Where to Go From Here

This session will explore the efficacy of the Brady Act in reducing gun crime (especially violent gun crime), methodological concerns with such an evaluation, legal versus illegal methods of acquiring firearms that may confound findings, and recommendations to better assess the impact of Brady and improve its enforcement potential.

Moderator: Steven Roth, New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

Joseph Vince, Chief of Firearms Division, ATF: “Provisions and Intent of the Brady Act” , and Wallace Nelson, Head of Regulatory Bureau, ATF: “How Brady Was Performed—indicators of “success” (Joe and Wally will collaboratively present in tandem)

Daniel Webster, John Hopkins University: “Methodological Consideration in Evaluating the Effects of the Brady Act”

Dean Rojek, University of Georgia: “ Illegal Methods of Acquiring Firearms and their Impact on the Effectiveness of the Brady Act”

Gary Kleck, Florida State University: “Methods to Improve Evaluation of Brady, with Positive Potential for Law Enforcement”

10:00–10:15

Break

10:15–10:45

Linking Data Sources to Understand Firearms Related Deaths

Barbara Pearce, Ralph Tanz, Childrens Memorial Hospital, “Issues in Linking Confidential Pediatric Firearm-Related Deaths”

Judith Lovely, Damir Kukek, Department of Justice Canada, “Firearms Deaths: A Prospective Study in Selected Provinces”

10:45–12:15

Comparing and Coordinating Information on Lethal Violence

Epidemiology and Lethal Violence: Allan Abrahamse (organizer, moderator).

A few short presentations about different techniques followed by a vigorous discussion that might lead, some day, to a partial consensus on what we ought to expect from somebody who claims to know what the future holds. It might also inspire some of us to agree to try a couple of common approaches to datasets with the idea of a session in 1998 contrasting the results.

Al Blumstein, Jacqueline Chohen, John Engberg, George Tita. “Spatial Dependence of Retaliatory Homicides”

Chris Rasche. Open discussion session on the “Tipping Point.” Is this a real epidemiological phenomena and could it apply to homicide? The application of public health ideas to Criminal Justice.

Roland Chilton. “Race, Class, April 9, 1998 and Homicide: A Proposal of Work for other HRWG Members”

Allan Abrahamse: Relating Demographic Trends to Lethal Violence

12:15–1:15

Lunch

1:30–4:45

Tour of the ATF Training Center

Reception at Joel Garner’s House 5:30–6:45

7:00–9:30

Dinner

The speaker is still not confirmed

June 11

7:30–8:30

Breakfast

8:30–9:45

What Works? Using Firearm Tracing Information in Violence Reduction Intervention Projects

John Firman- A Work in Progress: The IACP Gun Trafficking Interdiction Project

Paul Blackman- “The Limitations on BATF Tracing Data for Policymaking and Criminological Research”

Joe Vince or other TF expert Anthony Braga and David Kennedy- “Information Foundations for Violence Reduction Projects: Firearm Tracing Data”

9:45–10:00

Break

10–12:00

Gangs, Drugs, and Youth Violence

Moderator Ron Farrell

Kelly Damphouse, Victoria Brewer, Cary Adkinson: Gangs, Race/Ethnicity and Houston

Homicide in the 1990's

Kathleen Heide: Today's Music and Youth Violence

George Tita, Al Blumstein, Jackie Chohen- The Gang-Drug-Gun Nexus Evidence from Pittsburgh

Buddy Howell, Cheryl Maxson, David Curry: A Comparison of Responses to the National Youth Gang Survey and UCR Data

12-1:30

Lunch and Business Session

1:30-2:30

Area Research on Homicide

Moderator Derral Cheatwood

Vance McLaughlin. "Homicide in Savannah: 186-1903; 1986-1993" Citizen versus citizen homicide, homicides done by the government, research methods for analyzing homicides from the last century

Cheryl Maxson "New Data on Juvenile Homicide in Los Angeles"

Abb Lee: Marital Status and Homicide

Peter Grabosky: Homicide in Australia

3-6

Tour of Antietam Battlefield

(Vans will be provided)

7:15

Dinner at the South Mountain Inn

(at your expense)